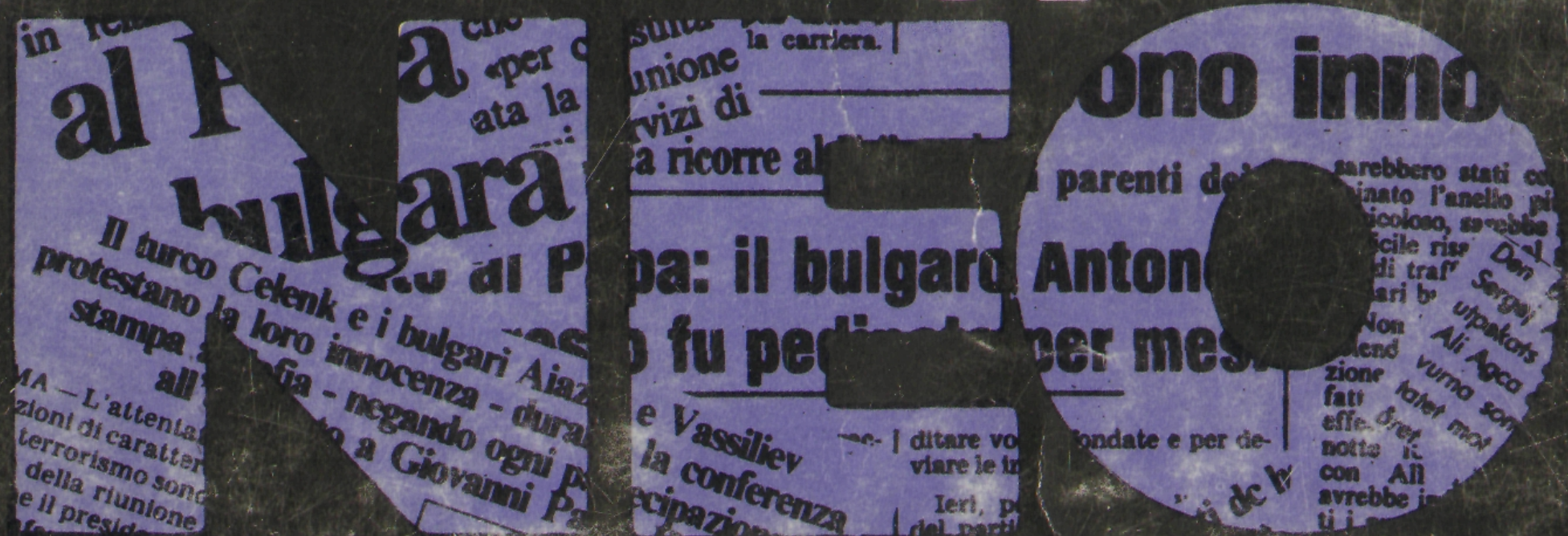


A SUBVERSION OF THE



CRUSADERS

A SUBVERSION OF THE NEO-CRUSADERS

BULGARIAN TELEGRAPH AGENCY
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TRUTH VERSUS LIE

This is how we could define in short the content of the book 'The Anatomy of a Slander Campaign'.

It covered developments from May 13, 1981 — the day of the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II, till the end of 1982, and their interpretations. That period witnessed both tragic episodes like the wounding of the Pope by the Turkish terrorist, and base machinations to shift the responsibility for them on to Bulgaria and other socialist countries.

It is worth recalling that from the time the shots were fired on May 13, 1981, till September 1982, there was a period of silence on this topic in the Western information media. Developments in Poland and their ill-intentioned interpretation were on the top of the agenda, accompanied by attempts to present these developments as a link in an operation to restore the pre-revolutionary order there and to detach Warsaw from its socialist allies. When the Polish hotbed began to die out, and internal reaction had to retreat despite the support of its imperialist patrons, the outline of a new operation, this time spearheaded against Bulgaria, began to emerge.

The US monthly 'Reader's Digest', employing the services of journalist Claire Sterling, a collaborator of the CIA, was the first to sell the fabrication that the terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca had actually been carrying out 'a communist design', for whose execution he had allegedly received instructions in Sofia.

There was in fact a design, and that a long-range design, but it had been conceived in Washington in the spirit of the crusade declared by President Reagan in his speech to the British Parliament on June 8, 1982.

On September 21, 1982, the spectrum of the big slander campaign against socialism was enriched by the next sensational element: the TV film of the US company NBC, 'proving' the so-called 'Bulgarian connection'. On September 23, Claire Sterling

expounded her thesis before the presidential commission monitoring the implementation of the Helsinki accords. As the Voice of America radio station commented, the president of the commission, Mrs Fenwick had made a point of thanking Mrs Sterling, without whose efforts as an independent journalist, as she had said, the case would have gone unnoticed like many other cases. In this way the fan of a monstrous provocation against Sofia and Moscow began to unfold from American territory. And then on November 25, the Bulgarian Sergei Antonov was arrested in Rome charged with ... complicity in the assassination attempt against the Pope on May 13, 1981.

On November 27, 1982, the BTA was authorized to state that the arrest of Sergei Antonov is a completely arbitrary, absolutely unjustified hostile act against the People's Republic of Bulgaria.

Beginning on November 26, the polyphonic choir of lies had already become installed in the Western newspapers and in the air. Added to the alleged accomplices were the head of the financial department of the Bulgarian Embassy in Rome Todor Aivazov, and the secretary to the military attache Major Zhelyo Vassilev. The thesis of an international plot was one of those most harped upon in the course of last autumn. The Italian newspaper 'Oggi' carried a photograph taken in St Peter's Square several moments after the assassination attempt, on which, allegedly, Antonov could be distinguished. The photo was reprinted by almost all publications of the Western press as 'evidence', but as Judge Martella subsequently stated, the man on the photo was an American citizen.

The refutations were either bypassed or offered with a mute on: it was a time of explosion of slander! Hundreds of untruths were being uttered in scores of languages, as if the polyglot could turn the lie into a truth!

On December 17, a press conference took place in Park Hotel Moskva in Sofia with the participation of 130 Bulgarian and 150 foreign journalists. Boyan Traikov, General Director of the BTA, introduced the participants in it: Antonov's wife Rossitsa Antonova, Todor Aivazov, Major Zhelyo Vassilev, as well as the Turkish citizen Bekir Celenk.

The General Director of BTA condemned the sweeping and vigorous anti-Bulgarian and anti-socialist campaign, adduced evidence of the innocence of Antonov, Aivazov and Vassilev, and ex-

posed the campaign launched in the West as a means of fuelling the spirit of confrontation and of serving its multifarious internal and foreign policy needs. Conducted in an absolutely democratic atmosphere, the press conference played the role of an international forum to search for and discover the truth. It has a wide and many-sided response. It was stated at the press conference that the Bulgarian authorities were ready to welcome in Sofia the examining magistrate Ilario Martella, and to offer him full cooperation. On December 20, the Prosecutor General of the People's Republic of Bulgaria Professor Kostadin Lyutov sent a telegram to Mr Clelio Darida, Minister of Justice of the Italian Republic, inviting Judge Martella to Bulgaria and stating the readiness of the competent Bulgarian authorities to give him the opportunity to talk with the persons he deems necessary in connection with the inquiry.

On December 17, TASS had already qualified the allegations in a number of Western states about 'a Bulgarian connection' and 'Soviet complicity' in the assassination attempt as absurd fabrications, whose purpose it is to sow ill-will with regard to the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, as well as to divert the attention from the war psychosis accompanying the military preparations of the West.

After December 18, the voices of doubt regarding the version of a Bulgarian trail began to multiply in the international mass media, moreover not only in the communist press! The Bulgarian trail operation has burst like a bubble — this phrase was repeated on the pages of numerous papers in the West.

The Politburo of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party published an appeal to the French people, covering a whole page in 'L'Humanite', which was spearheaded against the efforts of the bourgeois press, radio and television to distort the truth regarding the assassination attempt against the Pope. On both sides of the Atlantic, the version of a Bulgarian complicity began to be questioned ever more definitely. Only the most die-hard reactionary publications continued to mass-produce fabrications about it. For their part, the counsel for the defence of Sergei Antonov who had been detained in Rome — Professor Giuseppe Consolo and lawyer Adolfo Larussa, stated in no uncertain terms their conviction that Antonov is innocent. Proceeding from the results of inquiries conducted by them, they submitted a second petition to Judge Martella to release the Bulgarian citizen.

'The Anatomy of a Slander Campaign' carried a large amount of material from various countries in the world giving different treatment to the Antonov case, as well as a whole series of articles and commentaries by Bulgarian publicists. The Bulgarian contribution to the battle of truth against lie was tangible and effective. The journalistic pen took up the impassioned defence both of the cause of an innocently accused man, and of the moral values of the socialist civilization, subjected to distortion by the reactionary press, radio and television.

A Bulgarian writer once pronounced the memorable words: 'It is better to say ten truths in one language, than use ten languages to say one untruth.' The truth was stated in our Bulgarian language that neither Antonov, nor the Bulgarian authorities could have had anything to do with the criminal act in St Peter's Square.

One day, the untruth uttered in ten languages will give way, and the fact will come out into the open for the whole world to see that those trading in lies will be forced to face the whole disgrace of exposure. If, naturally, the category of disgrace does exist within their range of moral values ...

TODOR STOYANOV

Boris Dimovski



THE BEGINNING OF 1983: DISAGREEMENTS, RESERVATIONS, DOUBTS

There Is No Evidence of Guilt

Rome, January 1, 1983 (ANSA). Witnesses have given testimony regarding not only Antonov's presence in the office of Balkan Airlines on May 13, but also the Bulgarian employee's whereabouts in the days preceding the assassination attempt, at the time when, in the words of Ali Agca, Antonov had been with him. The seven persons who appeared before the magistrate to prove Antonov's innocence remained at his disposal from 9 a.m. to nearly 11.30 p.m. While the female witness, whose testimony was considered essential for the inquiry being conducted, was answering the questions of Judge Martella in the course of three hours, the others were placed in separate rooms and interrogated gradually, in order to check the lady's statements through cross-examination.

Antonov's counsel for the defence expressed their satisfaction with the interrogation of the witnesses; in their view it had been proved with certainty that Antonov has nothing to do with the assassination attempt against the Pope, and it might not even be necessary to summon other witnesses through the press, as had been envisaged.

Mexico, January 1 (G.Belchev, correspondent of the BTA). The unproved accusations of the Italian authorities against the Bulgarian government, and the vociferous anti-Bulgarian campaign recently launched in the US and Western Europe, were the central topic of one of the most serious political broadcasts of the Mexican television: 'In the Focus of Attention of the Journalist', hosted by the eminent journalist Roberto Rodriguez Banos.

In connection with the so-called revelations of the Turkish terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca, the commentator Jimena Suarez pointed out that after the unsuccessful attempt to undermine the socialist system in Poland through the establishment and encouragement of the Solidarity trade union, the present campaign is a fresh step in the anti-socialist strategy of reactionary circles in

the West aimed at discrediting Bulgaria before world public opinion.

According to Jimena Suarez, what is particularly noteworthy in this case is the stand that has now been taken by the CIA. As reported several days ago by the 'New York Times', the CIA rejects the version of the Italian authorities. 'The CIA seems to prefer that the inquiry regarding Agca's testimony should be wound up, for it fears the disclosure that the so-called 'Bulgarian trail' has just been fabricated by some organization aiming to discredit the socialist system,' the commentator points out.

Paris, January 2 (V.Mitev, correspondent of the BTA). 'First it was Afghanistan, then Poland, and now the turn has come of the Pope, as well. Three prongs of one campaign, whose main target are the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries,' wrote the publicist Yussef Adrari in a commentary published in the latest issue of the fortnightly progressive magazine 'Afrique-Asie' coming out here.

'All blows are permitted in this political and ideological battle,' the writer points out. 'Those who make propaganda out of these dirty blows should no longer sing the praise of the virtues of objectivity and democracy, and should boldly accept their status of a brainwashing enterprise, engaged in vulgar propaganda and manipulation with political objectives, which become clear only when the aim is attained. The same applies to this story about the Pope, presented as "the case of the century". What ultimately remains from the heaps of writings, charges and insinuations is the groundwork, which served as the scenario of this monstrous campaign.'

'The honorable American magazine 'Reader's Digest', which — I swear by William Casey — has nothing to do with the CIA, published the first article about what several months later was to become the "Bulgarian trail",' Yussef Adrari noted, remembering the writings of Claire Sterling.

'This is the same topic,' the writer continues, 'which is to be covered so very fully in the last few days: Sofia is a centre of international terrorism because of its strategic location and, now watch out, because of the terroristic traditions of the Bulgarians; everything goes through Sofia: the Italian Red Brigades,

the leftists and Turkish fascists, and, naturally, the inevitable Palestinians. To top it all comes the trafficking in narcotics and arms. They did not dare mention the traffick in white slaves, because this meant running the risk of the whole scenario crumbling down and provoking laughter in some editorial offices.'

Leaving aside the 'clues' referred to by the Italian officials, what other evidence can they produce in support of their grave accusations? Why do they refuse to leave for Bulgaria, when leading officials in Sofia have invited them? Are they indeed afraid? And what of, for God's sake? How did it happen that Ali Agca did not make these shocking disclosures until a year later? Bulgaria — a factor destabilizing the Middle East? ... And do you happen to know that 80 per cent of the electricity consumed in Turkey comes from Bulgaria, which is, by the way, crossed by 1.5 million Turks every year? Can one seriously believe that a state conducting on such a scale the policy of open doors with regard to its neighbour (whose political positions it, by the way, does not share), would engage in encouraging people of the James Bond type? The peoples of the 'third world' know from experience who is capable of this kind of operations. They have not forgotten Allende, Cabral, Ben Barka. A fitting description of this Bulgarian affair, patched up by Washington so that the dirty blows it has organized so far and is still preparing might be forgotten, is an Arab proverb which goes as follows: 'He hit me, yet he is the one who is crying, and what is more, he has gone to the judge before me to complain.'

Paris, January 3 (V.Mitev, correspondent of the BTA). 'Le Figaro' carries a long article by its Roman correspondent Baudouin Bollaert, consisting of three parts: 'The Accusation', 'The Defence', and 'The Remarks'.

'At this stage of the inquiry,' the article goes, 'it is legitimate to ask whether Judge Martella is in a position to collect, in conformity with the requirements, the necessary data on the accusation against Antonov, in order to take him to court. The man is absolutely discreet. But while some people claim to have at their disposal sufficient evidence to convict the chief of the Balkan Airlines office, others consider, on the contrary, that the course should be reversed and Antonov should be released from detention in the coming days.'

'This is the situation. In addition there arises the question which invariably remains unanswered: why should Antonov, provided he was guilty, remain in Rome for a year and a half after the assassination attempt? To better 'cover up' for Aivazov and Vassilev, who left in time? So that in case he is released, the thesis of a plot coming from the East could be better discredited? Everything is possible — obviously even the fact that the suspect may be completely innocent ...'

Rome, January 2 (EFE). The question of releasing Antonov, something which seemed unattainable only a week ago, began to be considered after the seven witnesses presented to Judge Ilario Martella by the defence had been interrogated, and their testimony was in favour of the employee of the Balkan Bulgarian Airlines.

The witnesses for the defence stated that Antonov had not been in St Peter's Square, as Ali Agca alleges, on the day of the assassination attempt, May 13, 1981, since they all remembered that he had been in his office, where he heard together with the other employees the live report over the radio of what had happened.

Vienna, January 3 (BTA). In its issue of December 25, 'Volksstimme', the printed organ of the Austrian Communist Party, carries a pamphlet against the anti-Bulgarian and anti-socialist campaign in the West, entitled 'A Political Deal with the Primitive Fear of the West Europeans'. Its author Werner Pirker writes:

'Sofia, the most friendly city in the Balkans, has become the target of much noisy publicity. It is being labelled a nest of terrorists, a command point of the Italian Red Brigades, the chief meeting place of the international mafia trafficking in arms and drugs, in short — the permanent residence of Satan. It is alleged that all actions which were to prepare the ground for storming the Promised Land of Western Europe were coordinated in the Bulgarian capital. The basic step had been the assassination attempt against the Holy Father. It had allegedly to be followed by special strikes involving narcotics and machine guns. Until recently it was the mafia that had been accused as the root of all this. Or may be the omnipotent 'godfathers' are only agents, trained in the Balkans.'

'The yarn-spinners of these 'Roman fairy tales' can only find a rather naive audience for their fables.'

Rome, January 12 (Hristo Petrov, correspondent of the BTA). The Italian press today commented on the examination of the flat of Sergei Antonov at 29 Pola Street in Rome, carried out Tuesday evening.

'Unita': 'According to unofficial information (none of the participants has made statements, as the practice of inquiry demands, correspondent's note) coming from judicial circles, after this examination Antonov collects one more point in his favour, for some details reported by Agca had not fully coincided with the actual layout of the rooms.'

'Corriere della Sera': 'It seems that Agca's description does not coincide with the layout and furnishing of the rooms. In ten days or so we shall know how precisely Agca has described the flat at 29 Pola Street, whether he has invented everything, or has ill remembered the scenario written for him by others.'

'Stampa': 'It seems that there are not a few disparities between the flat as described by Agca and the reality that the investigating authorities were confronted with yesterday. The result of the examination should score a point in favour of Antonov.'

Rome, January 4 (Hristo Petrov, correspondent of the BTA). The daily 'Repubblica' points out: 'Now it is already obvious that Antonov has nothing to do with the shots fired in St Peter's Square. The investigating authorities come across some questions which cropped up in the course of the investigation. Why did the Turkish assassin invent the Bulgarian trail? And if he did do it, who supplied him with the details that deceived even the investigating magistrates? In this way the "Bulgarian trail" runs the risk of turning into another trail, that would lead to the Italian secret services and politicians.'

'His (Ali Agca's) disclosures about the "Bulgarian trail" have such deep gaps that now in the light of Antonov's alibi they can be seen for what they are — a crass falsification. For instance Ali Agca alleges that he visited Aivazov's flat on May 11, 1981. The Turk did not give the name of the Bulgarian whom he knew as "Korev" to the examining magistrate. He, however, distinguished him on a photo shown to him by Judge Martella. But the lettering

on both the intercom and on the door of the flat gives the true name — Aivazov. And according to the statements of Ali Agca, he had first rung the intercom and then entered Aivazov's flat.'

'Unita' writes: 'The dark section of this extremely entangled story is the Ascoli Piceno prison. As Minister Lagorio himself stated in Parliament, the confessions of Ali Agca started in December 1981 in the Ascoli prison, after a conversation between the assassin and an agent of the services (the secret services, correspondent's note). The Minister said that that meeting had been permitted, but the court in Rome has categorically denied this. These actions, which had not been allowed, and the course of the investigation (with the refutation of numerous details from Agca's story) have already aroused the suspicion that the version presented to the judge by the perpetrator of the assassination attempt against the Pope, had in some way been manipulated or directed.'

Paris, January 4 (V.Mitev, correspondent of the BTA). In today's issue 'France Soire' carries a commentary by its special Rome correspondent Carlo Rebeci entitled: 'The Assassination Attempt against the Pope: Due to Lack of Evidence against the Protagonist of the "Bulgarian Trail", Italy Will Have to Resign Itself to the Release of Antonov.'

Vienna, January 20 (BTA). In their issues of January 18, 1983, the newspapers 'Arbeiterzeitung' and 'Volksstimme' published material on the so-called Antonov case.

Under the headline 'Agca's Testimony Has Been Prompted to Him by an Official', 'Arbeiterzeitung' reports that with the interrogation of the Turk Celebi, who was handed last week by the FRG to the Italian authorities the investigation into the motivation of the assassination attempt against the Pope had entered a crucial phase.

According to the Italian press, 'Arbeiterzeitung' writes, there are already doubts regarding the authenticity of Agca's testimony and especially regarding the description he makes of Antonov's flat. As the Italian newspapers reported, Agca's information regarding Antonov's flat had been supplied to him by someone specially selected for the purpose. According to 'Paese Sera', Agca has mentioned furniture bought by Antonov and brought to

his flat only after the official arrest of the Turk. Hence, Agca could not possibly have seen it. This Roman newspaper and 'Unita', the organ of the Italian Communist Party, consider that the Italian Supreme Court will probably have to release Antonov, because in all probability Agca had been instructed by 'someone special' exactly what evidence he had to give.

Antonov's counsel have voiced suspicion beforehand that Agca had been instructed by the Italian secret services to accuse their client of complicity. They said they had witnesses who could prove that on the day of the assassination attempt, Antonov had been in his office and could not, therefore, have been with Agca.

It has been confirmed by Judge Martella's office that last December Agca had been visited by intelligence agents, but that that visit had not been in connection with Agca's 'testimony', the report of 'Volksstimme' concludes.

Growing Doubts

Athens, January 4 (Correspondent of the BTA). Under the headline 'The Objectives of a Provocation', 'Risospastis' newspaper carries a long article by N.Kepesis, member of the CC of the Greek Communist Party, emphasizing the complete failure of the slander campaign against the countries of existing socialism launched in connection with the 'Antonov case'. The writer of the article is of the view that the Greek Government should do 'its best to ensure more truthful information' for the Greek people regarding the substance and objectives of that slander campaign against Bulgaria and the other socialist countries.

Rome, January 5 (BTA). The Italian magazine 'Panorama' of January 3, 1983, carries an article by Alvaro Ranzoni entitled 'Italy, Bulgaria and Terrorism' with the subheading 'The Counsel for the Defence Has the Floor', which contains the following passage:

'Here is, item by item, how and why the Bulgarian government defends its people who have been charged with espionage and complicity with Italian terrorism. All this has been made up, it says. What if it is right?'

The assassination attempt against the Pope, with which the Bulgarians have been seriously charged, this time is presented as 'an armed hand' of KGB, the Soviet secret service.

When this list took shape, almost all parties, headed by the Socialist, launched an offensive: Bulgaria is at the centre of too many destabilizing machinations and continues to defend the culprits. The Italian ambassador in Sofia was recalled. Diplomatic relations were practically frozen.

The Bulgarians took precautionary measures, placing those suspected of complicity in the assassination attempt against the Pope (this accusation alarms them most) at the disposal of the Italian journalists. They likewise prepared something like a

counter-trial, warning that the entire accusation had been something made up in advance: Ilario Martella, the examining magistrate, had been led to a false trail. Having on many occasions reflected the elements that compelled the magistrature to issue the warrants of arrest, 'Panorama' now discussed the positions of the defence, item by item.

This is not Aivazov. The man running away from St Peter's Square on May 13, 1981, a few seconds after the assassination attempt against the Pope, cannot be Todor Aivazov, the treasurer of the Bulgarian Embassy. An evidence of this is the comparison between the photo of the real Aivazov (published by 'Panorama') and the photo taken by Lowel Newton of the lean man armed with a handgun (according to the testimony of the man who took the picture), who is obviously younger and shorter. Aivazov, who is 39, is nearly 1.80 m tall and is definitely bigger.

Consequently, Mehmet Ali Agca has either made a mistake or has lied.

Mysterious visits. When accusing Aivazov, the Turkish hired assassin did not confine himself to stating that the treasurer had been one of the three Bulgarians aiding him in the plot. Such a statement would not have been sufficient to convince a judge. Agca distinguished Aivazov also on the photos in the 'Bulgarian album' and offered, it seems, at least one more objective confirmation, i.e. he described Aivazov's flat in Rome, at 36 Galiani Street. In this case what should the investigating authorities have done? They should have gone immediately to the flat and checked Agca's description. 'In our view, this has not been done,' they say at the Bulgarian Embassy.

Does this mean that the description given by Agca had not been checked? Or may be the check-up has been made along different channels? On this matter the Bulgarians say that during the past few months strange visits have been noticed in the building (housebreakers, who break in without stealing anything, etc.) and that complaints had been regularly lodged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a detail confirmed to 'Panorama' by sources in the Italian Foreign Ministry.

The alibi. According to what is known about his interrogations, Agca also testified that together with the other plotters, Aivazov had also taken part in the careful surveys of St Peter's

Square on May 11 and 12 before the assassination attempt. But the embassy spokesman Vassil Dimitrov claims that Aivazov has an ironclad alibi at least for May 12. 'As treasurer he was here the whole day because of the reception given in honour of opera singer Raina Kabaivanska in connection with the presentation to her of the Golden Disc of the Balkanton firm.'

Antonov's transistor radio. According to claims of Consolo and Laroussa, counsel for the defence of the other Bulgarian charged with complicity in the plot, Sergei Antonov had an ironclad alibi at least for May 11 and 13. As deputy head of the office of the Balkan Bulgarian Airlines (the chief of the office was not in Rome at that time) he had to deal personally with the flight to Sofia on May 11 and to be present while the 65 passengers boarded the plane. Antonov was at Fiumicino Airport from the morning till 6 p.m., and therefore could not take part in the survey of St Peter's Square. While on May 13, at least five people are sure of having seen him in his office when the radio first reported the assassination attempt (Agca claims that during that time Antonov had been in the car in Della Conciliazione Street waiting to help him escape). One of the witnesses for the defence even remembered a detail: Antonov went down from his office into the street to take from his car an old transistor radio whose batteries were almost gone in order to follow the news of the assassination attempt. In support of this testimony and in order to prove that it had not been made up at the last moment, the defence points out that this detail has been confirmed in the past few days by Antonov himself, when he was already in prison in solitary confinement.

The language. Agca (again according to the scanty information we have about his interrogations) claims that his contacts with the Bulgarian accomplices in organizing the assassination were realized in Italian — a language which Antonov, Aivazov and the third Bulgarian Vassilev know fairly well. But at the moment of his arrest, Agca insisted that he did not speak Italian.

Now Agca speaks Italian quite satisfactorily. He has allegedly learned Italian during his 19 months of imprisonment in Rome and in Ascoli Piceno. In this respect, too, another alarming page is being opened according to the Bulgarians. Officially, Mehmet Ali Agca had lived throughout that time in solitary confinement: without radio, television, newspapers, and with but rare contacts with the prison warders. The conversations, as Clelio Darida,

Minister of Justice, testifies, take place through a television camera and a little armoured glass window. Is it possible to learn a foreign language in such conditions? The answer is obviously 'no'.

According to the Bulgarians, there is one single possibility — the solitary confinement might have been much less strict than it is claimed. And if the isolation had been eased, comes the counter-attack from the adherents of the hypothesis of an anti-Bulgarian machination, Agca could not only learn Italian but also receive proper instructions, in order to frame up the plot with all the requisite identifications of photos and objective confirmations (telephone numbers, apartment descriptions, etc.)

The abortive escape. This is only a psychological element, but the Bulgarians set great store by it. The three accomplices of Agca had remained for more than a year in Rome after such a momentous operation, and although it was known that the young Turk had threatened to disclose everything if he did not get assistance, Vassilev did not leave until June 6, 1982, when the term envisaged for his stay in Italy had expired; Aivazov left, it seems, on November 12, while Antonov calmly remained in his place to the day of his arrest. And yet immediately after the assassination attempt, a 'Bulgarian trail' began to be talked about. In the summer of 1982, the US television company NBC unambiguously exposed it in a documentary film, while journalist Claire Sterling wrote about it in detail in August in the US magazine 'Reader's Digest', and in September in the Italian 'Selezione'. And that was not all. During the investigations of the Scricciolo case in May 1982, the office of the Balkan Bulgarian Airlines in Rome was searched by the police and Antonov himself, who no doubt had guessed the exact motives of the investigation, calmly helped the agents make photographic copies of the lists of passengers that had been seized. What better opportunity to flee unobstructed?

'THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG...'

IN ITS ISSUE OF MARCH 14, THE BULGARIAN WEEKLY 'POGLED' CARRIED EXTENSIVE EXCERPTS FROM PUBLICATIONS IN THE ITALIAN MAGAZINE 'NUOVA POLITIA' (No 1, 1983).

ALMOST ALL SOCIO-POLITICAL PUBLICATIONS IN THE WORLD, ALONG WITH THE RADIO AND TELEVISION COMPANIES, CARRIED MATERIALS AND COMMENTARIES CONCERNING THE ARREST OF THE BULGARIAN CITIZEN SERGEI ANTONOV IN ROME. IT WAS QUITE NATURAL THAT THE TONE, THE ARGUMENTS AND THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION WERE DIFFERENT, DEPENDING ON THE PARTY, CLASS, RELIGIOUS, PUBLIC AND POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF THE RESPECTIVE PUBLICATION.

The 'Pogled' weekly devoted several publications to that question. In its desire to be as objective and frank with its readers as possible, 'Pogled' also printed the opinions of many people outside Bulgaria. Nonetheless, there are people who not quite openly are making allusions to the effect that we are questioning without reason the competence and good will of the Rome investigation, that we have suspicions about the activities of the secret services in the West and in the long run, about the sluggish, unconscientious and incompetent intervention of a number of leading figures in the state hierarchy of the Republic of Italy in revealing the truth about the 'Antonov case'.

Now let us hear what the Italian magazine 'Nuova Politia' in its issue of January 1, 1983 had to say, long before a whole series of new 'ironclad' arguments were brought to the surface in defence of Sergei Antonov's innocence. As our reader may conjecture from the very title of the magazine, it should be expected that both its authors and editors are competent enough to merit attention.

We shall only quote excerpts from four articles published by 'Nuova Politia' for lack of space and due to our desire to dwell on the most essential points. If we take the liberty of supplying brief commentaries in brackets, it is not because we want to sway the reasoning of the reader but just to try to stimulate him in his reasonings.

All the passages in light-faced type and the headlines of the articles have been literally translated from the 'Nuova Politia' magazine.

'Bulgaria: Narcotics, Weapons, Assaults'

PAOLO POZZESI

' "The Bulgarian connection": it is certain that however things may turn out, it will continue to be talked about for quite a long time yet. But it could not be said that the "affair" is clear. As it usually happens, the public opinion was able to realize, broadly speaking, that there was "something wrong". For a long time now it has grown accustomed to seeing nothing but glimpses of truths behind the gloomiest and bloodiest histories in the country: assaults, bloodshed, plots, assassinations, etc.'

'We have had on more than one occasion the chance of revealing in the pages of this magazine the connection between the "circles" engaged in the trafficking of drugs and arms, and not only in the technical aspect of the exchange of these commodities but in the broader (and obviously concealed) aspect of the problem, that is the interest in causing a "permanent destabilization" by carrying out terrorist actions, assassinations, assaults, bloodshed, etc. In the interest of truth, we must say that the organs charged with the task of maintaining public order were inclined to think for a long time that those definitions, or hypotheses, are not worthy of attention, adding that the biggest obstacle was that of accepting the possible connection between the mafia in our society (in Italy, and it is no secret, in America as well) and terrorism, be it 'red terrorism' or 'black terrorism'. Another obstacle was the difficulty of accepting the ambiguous, and sometimes suspicious role played by our secret services with disturbing regularity. Let us recall that the accusations of "mysterious forces" of some sort came in rapid succession and that to talk about "connections" was tantamount to being regarded as a madman or even as something worse. It is also true that the "connections" were not always the same and it is this perhaps that explains why some alarming questions have remained and still are unanswered.'

'The answers about the "Bulgarian trail", however, were plentiful; some of them were provided even before the questions had been asked and not all of them tallied with one another.'

(Is it not the place here to ask the questions of 'who' is fabricating the answers before questions have been asked and 'why'? And if this somebody is strong enough to have the right to make an answer, is it not also within his powers to invent the questions? This trail is no less intriguing than the false 'Bulgarian trail' and unlike the latter, it will inevitably lead to something real!)

'The most important figure among those arrested seems to be the Syrian Hanifi Arsan, a shareholder of the Stibam company, based in Milan, in Oldofredi Street. The building, owned by the Ambrosiano bank, is the same where the former deputy chairman lives, who was at first a great friend and then a bitter enemy of Roberto Calvi, the same Roberto Rosone well known from the news briefs about the credit bank. Arsan's company was a customer of Ambrosiano on which it leaned for all its bank operations. In this contraband, as in previous ones, the names of people connected with the P-2 lodge, appear here and there.

'Judging by the results of the investigation, which, it is true, is still going on, the narcotic (morphine) is said to have arrived in Trieste and, from there, was distributed for Trento, Bolzano and Munich by a network of local, frequently unsuspected accomplices. The mafia in Sicily (mention is made of the Gerlando Alberti family) took it upon itself to smuggle a considerable part of the drug into Palermo, where it was converted into heroin. Some people from Marseille are known to have participated in the smuggling of the narcotic from Italy to France and to the United States.'

'It should be considered quite normal that the smuggler Arsan may have been "kept an eye on" by our secret services for years on end, as Minister Lagorio triumphantly stated. These are services which for many years had been trying not to bother him, perhaps because Arsan himself worked for the American service combating drug traffic, which often operates abroad as a partner of the CIA.

'There is one country left, Bulgaria, where the smugglers of drugs and arms have met (so much has been written about this that it must be true) in Sofia.'

(The Loch Ness monster was written about and pictures were published far earlier and far more extensively, and it turned out to be an ordinary log.)

'Now let us get back to the assassination attempt against the Pope. On May 13, 1981, the Turk Ali Agca shot Pope John Paul II in St Peter's Square with a Browning, calibre nine, wounding him seriously. Ali Agca was arrested immediately, and said practically nothing. He spoke no Italian, and knew very little English, but the problem obviously did not lie in that. The fact is that Agca did not utter a single word, nor did he utter a word during his trial. He is known to belong to the 'Grey Wolves', an extreme right-wing, even an outright fascist organization. He was under a sentence of death for assassinating the editor-in-chief of a left-wing newspaper. He had mysteriously escaped from prison and then vanished altogether. One year and a few months later Ali Agca said that he wanted to talk — so talk he did and a great deal at that. He said that in May 1981 he was in Palma de Mallorca from where he had telephoned Serdar Celebi in Frankfurt, one of the leaders of the 'Grey Wolves', who transmitted to him the order to kill the Pope: the meeting between Agca and Celebi took place at the Milan railway station, where the assassin said he had received the gun hidden in the case of a camera. Later the Turk slightly but significantly changed his version: he now said that the meeting had taken place in Sofia in the presence of the Turkish smuggler Bekir Celenk who supposedly offered him 1,500 million Italian liras (three million Deutschmark) as a reward if he killed the Pope. He said he had met with three Bulgarian agents in Rome, as had been previously agreed upon — Sergei Ivanov Antonov, deputy director of the Balkan Bulgarian Airlines Office in Rome, Todor Aivazov, treasurer of the Bulgarian Embassy, and Zhelyo Vassilev, secretary to the military attache. On May 11 and 12, together with them he had inspected the place of the proposed assassination in St Peter's Square. On May 13 Antonov and Aivazov set off, as Agca said, together with him, carrying guns and bombs in order to cause panic and to help him along if necessary. Antonov was arrested while the other two Bulgarians had been in Bulgaria for some time. The three of them rejected all charges and what is more, Antonov established an alibi which consequently turned out to be very solid. But that is not the point.'

(Let us see now what the point is!)

'... The point is that in the past few months an American TV network, clinging in large measure to the thesis maintained by journalist Claire Sterling showed a reportage in which the "Bul-

garian trail" in the assassination attempt against the Pontiff was clearly declared ... Late in September Judge Martella, who was charged with the task of conducting the investigation, had visited not just Frankfurt and Ankara, but Washington too, in order to question some American tourists who had happened to be in St Peter's Square during the assassination attempt and to meet — nothing wrong about that, with the CIA chiefs who for quite obvious reasons followed and continue to follow the progress of the investigation.'

(That the Americans are following the progress of the investigation is perfectly clear. That someone allows them not only to follow it from close quarters but to interfere in it in one way or another, is not hard to guess, either. What remains less clear is why Martella visited Frankfurt, Ankara and even Washington, but could not find time to come to Sofia for all the persistent invitations on the part of Bulgaria.)

'It has now been officially admitted (again by Minister Lagorio who God knows why considered it to be a special merit), that on December 29, 1981, and probably afterwards, agents of the SISMI (Intelligence and Security Service at the Italian Defence Ministry) visited the prison at Ascoli Piceno (note the chance coincidence), where Agca was serving a life sentence and was supposed to be staying in solitary confinement for a year, and "persuaded" him to "admit" to having acted on the instruction of the Bulgarians and to mention the names of Antonov, Aivazov and Vassilev. Judge Martella had not been informed of that visit at all. This absolutely improper interference, which however was not undeclared, by the military secret services, would seriously affect the results of any investigation.

' "The Bulgarian trail" in the assassination attempt against the Pope was therefore cooked up at the SISMI headquarters, probably on the suggestion, or on the instructions of someone who wanted to "test us" without personally committing himself, and who later withdrew, leaving it to the Italians to straighten themselves out of the mess. Part of that mess are the files containing photos of the Bulgarian employees based in Rome, prepared by the SISMI before the visit to Agca, so that the latter could easily show the judge the photographs of the three Bulgarians as they had already been shown to him.

'The tally, therefore, is trafficking in drugs and weapons linked to terrorism, to espionage, an assassination attempt against a head of state who from the spiritual point of view is the head of 700 million catholics. Truth and falsehood — everything is lumped together. The reality in similar spheres, however, is often more differentiated than that.'

(The reality, that is the truth, has no nuances. Is this not obvious from the following passages?)

'Suffice it to recall the case of Ronald Stark, an operative with the intelligence agency of the US Defence Department (DIA), who was sent to Lebanon and Italy and arrested in 1976, after he was found in possession of a large quantity of heroin (several dozen kilograms); Ronald Stark had recruited "red" terrorists to be trained at the camps in Baalbek, was the inspirer of "Revolutionary Action", a terrorist group within the orbit of the "Red Brigades". Arrested again on October 11, 1978, for organizing an armed band, Ronald Stark was released (after being accused only of drug smuggling) on April 11, 1979 by the examining magistrate of Bologna, Florida, as Stark "had begun to figure on the list of the American secret services" since 1960. On his release from prison Stark spent 20 days or so in hospital, then vanished into the blue, when a certain judge naively issued a writ for his arrest again for organizing an armed band.'

'The assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II'. There is nothing much to be said in this connection. It would be absurd to let matters rest here: conclusions, suggestions or statements for "official use" by the parties of the government coalition. If there is any evidence, even a single proof, but an irrefutable one, that the Bulgarian government, the Soviet government, or any other government have organized, or are involved in that assassination attempt, this must be publicly stated. To talk of the secrecy of the investigation, bearing in mind how many authentic and false stories have been put about, would be ridiculous.

'But if it is true that the "trail" was fabricated, then we can say that we have got to the bottom of it: state organs (supported by ministers, secretaries and deputy secretaries of government parties) will not only be accused once again of inadmissible abuses, but will seriously discredit our country in the international arena.'

* * *

'In conclusion, we can say, as we did at the beginning, that the "Bulgarian connection" will continue to be talked about. It is necessary for us not to stop in the middle of the road, as those who pushed us too far ahead may be trying to do. We do not have in mind the judges who have done their job and perhaps themselves have been deceived. What about the others? The truth must sometimes be said — the whole truth at that, nothing but the whole truth.'

(The truth must always be said, the whole truth at that, nothing but the whole truth!)

He Who Knows Must Talk

FALCO ACAME

Member of Parliament

'Bulgaria and the Pope, Bulgaria and narcotics, Bulgaria and weapons, Bulgaria and Scricciolo. We had long known everything: Can we then give the secret services a 'top mark' for their conduct?

'The question is more complicated than that. If they had known, why did they not promptly issue the necessary warnings? Is it cooperation that exists between SISMI, SISDE and the judicial authorities, is it rivalry, or is it conflicts in some cases? Were the Bulgarian agents taking their first steps in this job to have made all these mistakes, which could be made by a '007' agent: to transmit an unusual 'amount' of coded messages and arouse the suspicion of all traditional listening stations; to accompany Ali Agca to St Peter's Square and let themselves be photographed in the act by the public security services of the Vatican; to invite the assassin to their flats in Rome so as to organize the operation (as if it were a question of organizing a picnic party), even without wearing the traditional false beards.'

'Now, if there is really a desire to understand how things developed, those officers must be questioned who could say a lot about the "dangerous connections".'

'Otherwise it could be said that there was a desire to kick up a great "fuss" between Italy and Bulgaria that would serve for domestic consumption in Italy, as well as for the relations between the United States and the Vatican.'

'The problem is raised again of parliamentary control over the services. The members of the parliamentary commission remind us somewhat of Gigliola Cinquetti of the 1960s: she was not old enough to be in love. The members of the parliamentary commission are not yet 'old enough' in order to see through the activities carried out by the secret services. The question of parliamentary control over arms smuggling is very urgently raised. Italy is one of

the few countries which does not operate such a law. That law was nipped in the bud by the strong lobby of the arms merchants.'

'In fact, the big fuss that was kicked up around the "Bulgarian case" draws our attention to a number of serious problems which remain unresolved. Perhaps Bulgaria could serve as a political "test of conscience", which could prompt salutary self-criticism. But the hopes for a similar catharsis, if we look back over our past, are really not big at all.'

('A test of conscience' can and must be carried out in a republic every day. But if this test and the necessary catharsis must be brought down to bear on an innocent man and on a state pursuing a clear and categorical policy nothing will be left of the good intentions even before a start was made in carrying them out!)

Who Will Acquit Lagorio?

LUCIANA CASTENA,

a Member of the European Parliament

‘It is now quite possible that the Bulgarian Antonov, who was arrested as he is thought to be an accomplice of the Turk Ali Agca in his assassination attempt against the Pope, may be released. True enough, the evidence of his being guilty has so far proved totally unfounded. As every man of common sense was able to understand from the very beginning, for how is it possible to maintain that a big country, even though one not free from contradictions like the Soviet Union, should have entrusted its destiny, albeit through its Bulgarian allies, to a person who is obviously easily susceptible to blackmail, like that Turk who had mysteriously escaped from prison in his country and was manipulated by various forces, a type of person who could not be relied upon to keep his mouth shut? Furthermore, how could one have thought that diplomats, officially accredited to the Italian state, had been picked to recruit the assassin of the Pope and then to accompany him to the place where the Pontiff was to be killed? Even if we are to accept this hypothesis about the assassination of the Pope as being authentic politically — and this is not all that easy, bearing in mind the repercussions which the crime would have had within Poland itself — it had to be taken into account at least that when a plot of this kind is prepared, even the least experienced plotters resort to more sophisticated methods. In all cases it should be presumed that the KGB is no service of amateurs.

‘Antonov, therefore, will probably be acquitted. But will it be proper for the Defence Minister Lagorio to be acquitted, who declared not at a dinner with friends but while performing his official functions in Parliament that he was certain that the instigators of the plot were in the Kremlin?

‘This is not a rhetorical question but a logical one. True, it is not unimportant for a country to have a top-ranking minister who so easily adopts such a line. This is obviously putting it mildly,

bearing in mind that his stand, to which a large portion of the press and of the official political world responded so energetically, leads to quite a few political ramifications: not only to create in Italy an atmosphere reminiscent of that in 1948, but to change its political orientation. And precisely through that cooked up story to link Italy to the most extremist American circles, to those who are seeking a confrontation between the two parts of Europe, to firmly establish the project of a nuclear rearmament, thus separating it from almost all the main political forces in Europe.

‘Hence, the history of the plot cannot be easily put on the shelf. How and why was it possible for that plot to be hatched? Who gave the Italian secret services the go-ahead to visit Ali Agca in the prison in Ascoli Piceno, thus making it possible to build up the hypothesis that Ali Agca had been recruited before his unexpected and astonishing confession? As we learn now, neither the parliamentary commission charged with the task of exercising control over the secret services was informed of that visit, nor was it allowed to take place by the examining magistrate, or officially by the Minister of Justice. Could it be that such a puzzle may remain unresolved? Just the same, those who seem worried by these new and unclear machinations are very few.’

‘Now Lagorio must at least be called to account for his omissions and his statements.’

(No comment ...)

Unconvincing Stories

ELISEO MILANI,
a Member of Parliament

'Let us clear things up. Truly, it is not improbable for the Bulgarian secret services to have operated in our country, resorting to more or less legal means. It is not improbable, for that is what they are supposed to do just as is the case with all secret services. And it is nothing new that "007" agents from all states have singled out our country as one of the privileged theatres for their activities. This applies for the CIA, for the KGB, for Bulgarians and for Israelis, and God knows for how many more like them.

'What is absolutely incredible is the restoration of the "facts" as set out with enviable confidence by ministers in the House of Deputies (worth mentioning among them is Minister Lagorio, the one who declared an "act of war"). Perhaps it may be true that the KGB operates in Italy among other countries, it may likewise be true that it resorts to the services of the other allied countries of the USSR, but does it seem possible to you that they will let themselves be caught red-handed, accompanying the assassin in a car like a bunch of schoolboys, the assassin who was to bump off the Pope, or trusting an individual like Ali Agca to keep mum? And do you think that it is really possible for the skilful Bulgarian agents to have succeeded in masterminding the traffic of tanks, helicopters and all kinds of weapons in cooperation with Turkish and Syrian members of the mafia without arousing the suspicion of our security services, or the suspicion of the services of our allied countries?

'There is something which rings quite false in the current "hunt for the Bulgarian". It has the markings of the year 1948, of pretentious campaigns launched with the aim of achieving paltry internal political purposes.'

Many and interesting are the questions which the authors of the above-mentioned articles raise in the 'Nuova Politia' magazine. Understandably, some of them are of such a nature that they do not allow us to make commentaries, both from a legal and ethical point of view, for that would be interference in the internal affairs of another state. Raised as they were by Italian authors, however, these questions and problems shed a great deal of light on many aspects of the case which we are above all interested in, that is the illegal arrest of the Bulgarian citizen Antonov and the subversion launched against the People's Republic of Bulgaria. It would be exaggeration on our part to assert that the articles in question are typical of the Italian press, or that everything that was said or implied in them, is the absolute truth. But one way or another, they are characteristic of the attitude towards many instances of the Italian state and the doubt cast by Italian society upon certain distinctive features of its administration. In this context, the published excerpts add some characteristic elements to our picture of the situation in which the attack on our country is being made, are eloquent proof of how shady and often disreputable are some organs of the state power in the western countries. In the final analysis, the articles referred to above go to show once again some of the methods employed in the struggle against the countries of existing socialism involving sinister and treacherous forces which will stick at nothing.

The truth about Sergei Antonov's innocence will out and it is bound to come out. Then the entire world public will yet again see where this 'SOMETHING WRONG' lies, which is now without reason being employed in order to 'explain' and obscure the case of the arrest of the Bulgarian. For there is only one truth!

'POGLED' newspaper

NEITHER MOSCOW, NOR SOFIA ARE BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST THE POPE

This is the title of Luigi Cavallo's interview published in Bulletin No 3 of January 27, 1983 of the Italian National Agency for Political and Economic Information (ANIPe) in Milano.

An influential member of the Strategic Studies Centre in Washington, a journalist and writer, Luigi Cavallo is an expert on strategic and military questions, well familiar with the mechanisms that regulate and make the secret services in the countries of the East and West work, but he does not believe in any 'Bulgarian trail'.

From the interview, excerpts from which we reprint, it is clear that Luigi Cavallo does not believe that the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II was conceived in Moscow and executed by the hand of Sofia.

Question: The inquiry into the assassination attempt in St Peter's Square is getting complicated. Dr Ilario Martella continues to consider Mehmet Ali Agca a trustworthy witness of the prosecution. Do you think that the description of the organization of the attempt advanced by Minister Lagorio in Parliament, rests on sound foundations?

Answer: The representatives of the secret services in Washington, London, Bonn, Ankara and Jerusalem are very skeptical regarding the description of the organization of an 'international plot' offered by the Italian secret services and presented to the Chamber of Deputies by Minister Lagorio, a socialist. Some judges, who seemed satisfied with the publicity they enjoyed in the world by their statements, are becoming aware that their hypothetical theses are at variance with the results of the investigation, while the clues cannot stand the analysis made by simple common sense.

Question: Nevertheless there are such clues and they remain.

Answer: In its sixty-year-long history, the USSR has never taken the initiative of liquidating foreign heads of state, even when they were called Adolf Hitler. Never has the KGB acted against

statesmen of the capitalist West or a pope of pro-Atlantic leanings like Pius XII. John Paul II, however, shares many of the formulations of the Soviet peace propaganda.

Question: Why did the Turkish murderer invent the Bulgarian connection?

Answer: Understandably, to exonerate the 'Grey Wolves'. Did he find the anti-Soviet arguments and the promises of our secret services convincing? They were the ones to supply him with elements and 'answers' which made it possible for the 'assassin', who after his detention had deliberately spoken vaguely to the investigating authorities, to change the version once again. Immediately after his detention Agca maintained that he had designed and carried out the attempt by himself, and revealed that previously he had intended to assassinate Queen Elizabeth, Simone Veil, Kurt Waldheim and President Reagan. He had not hinted at the Bulgarian services at all.

Question: In your opinion Agca had lied all the time?

Answer: I would say that he got 'entangled' in a mess of true and false statements with the obvious aim to fool the investigation. 'During the interrogation he led me wherever he wished', judge Domenico Sicca commented. 'Agca's tempering is not by far that of the wailing braggart Scricciolo.' 'He could fall asleep on the chair and wake up refreshed', Nicola Simone from the special anti-terrorist police units remembered. The initiative of our secret services who interviewed Agca in prison all the same facilitated the game of the 'Grey Wolves'.

Question: Of the 'Grey Wolves'?

Answer: That is right. When the ring of the investigation began to tighten round the Turkish extremist right-wing organization, whose members Agca and his accomplices were, SISMI proposed the version of the complicity of Antonov and his colleagues to the Turkish terrorist. This version, however, collapsed during the interrogations of the Turks Atalay Saral, Musa Serdar Celebi and Mehmet Sener, the results of which increased the open scepticism of the leaders of the FRG secret services who do not believe that Agca and his accomplices, belonging to the anti-Russian extreme right wing, could be the principal figures acting in a plot managed by the Bulgarians and elaborated by the Soviets.

Question: Would not the physical elimination of the Pope, a Pole, destroy the mainstay of the trade union movement in Poland?

Answer: On the contrary, it would have strengthened the positions of Solidarity very much, immolating to the cause of this social and political movement the first Polish Pope, a martyr of religion and of the free trade union. Never would the head of a communist secret service reveal to a 23-year-old Turk the connections of his own Embassy in Rome, abandoning him then to his fate as prisoner of the Italian authorities. The introduction of martial law in December 1981 and its lifting a year later clearly shows that USSR knew perfectly well that the question could be solved by purely Polish initiatives, without having to resort to military invasion or other grand-scale measures by the Warsaw Pact.

Question: What about the international connections of terrorism?

Answer: On April 30, 1981, two weeks before the attempt in St Peter's Square, a CIS report to the presidents of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate asserted: 'No elements have emerged to allow the building of hypotheses about sure links between Italian terrorism and apparatuses and structures of other states.' The call to look for a permanent plot abroad, masterminded by Andropov is tendentious and hypocritical. Such allegations give the Italian ruling class an occasion for self-justification and relieve it of its enormous responsibilities.

Question: But the attempt on the life of the Pope is of a clear international character and Italian terrorism has nothing to do with it.

Answer: Neither have the Bulgarians anything to do with it.

Question: But Kissinger, Brzezinski and Klein believe that the KGB also bears responsibility for Agca's attempt ...

Answer: Their statements rest on a supposition, which has yet to be fully verified and which increasingly proves to be groundless. They thought that the Italian magistrates already had proofs of the participation of the Bulgarian secret services in the assassination attempt. But the verification turns things in favour of the exclusion of all responsibility of the Bulgarians. With the elimination of the above supposition, Brzezinski's 'logic' which is far from being 'incontrovertible' becomes untenable.

Question: But Ray Klein ...

Answer: What was the concrete preliminary condition which this former head of the Intelligence and Investigation Bureau of the State Department laid down in his statements to the 'Stampa'

newspaper? I am sure, Klein said, that the Italian authorities would not have exposed themselves to such great risks — political, diplomatic and ethical — had Agca's confessions not been confirmed by other evidence. It is strange that the Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies in Washington (of which I, incidentally, am a member) failed to take into account the deplorable state, the confusion and inefficiency of our so-called 'services' and the mania of some judges to appear on TV and to be on the front pages of the papers. With the dropping out of the preliminary condition, the corresponding responsibility of the KGB also drops out.

About Cavallo, Palia and the Bulgarian Connection

Rome (BTA correspondent Hristo Petrov). The above is the title of a note in the weekly bulletin No 11 of ANIPE Agency, Milan. It reads as follows:

‘On March 5, Saturday, the Italian newspapers printed reports from Sofia saying, among other things, that the Bulgarian press had featured prominently the interview of Luigi Cavallo for the ANIPE News Agency. In the interview entitled “Neither Moscow nor Sofia Stand Behind the Assassination Attempt against the Pope” Luigi Cavallo “demolished the myth” of the so-called “Bulgarian trail” and made very serious accusations against some of our socialist ministers who, in his opinion, had framed up the whole “case”. While commenting on the interview, which obviously was in favour of Bulgaria, in contrast to other sources before that which had contributed to raise accusations against her, ‘Giornale’ correspondent Guido Palia let his nerves betray him, something which is unworthy of a special correspondent. He qualified Luigi Cavallo as a “spy journalist” who has given an interview for a “suspicious news agency”.’

In addition to the note the ANIPE bulletin reprints a letter sent by Titto Livio Ricci, Director of the Agency, to Indro Montanelli, Director of ‘Giornale Nuovo’ newspaper. The letter says that the correspondent of ‘Giornale’ (‘Giornale Nuovo’, editor’s note) Guido Palia calls Luigi Cavallo a ‘spy journalist’ in his correspondence from Sofia of March 5 and ambiguously insists that Cavallo’s interview for a ‘suspicious news agency’ did a favour to Bulgarian propaganda. The 60-year-old Luigi Cavallo, a professional journalist and a man, no doubt, with a certain experience with regard to the secret services (otherwise why should ANIPE interview him?) is mature enough to read ‘Giornale’ and to answer Guido Palia. But why is ANIPE called a ‘suspicious news agency’? What conclusion will a reader draw from this definition, which lends itself to any interpretation? Wouldn’t it have been better for Palia, for

us and for the readers, Titto Ricci writes in his letter, if the facts were presented in such a way as for instance in 'Corriere della sera'? Moreover, as ANIPE stressed, this was the personal opinion of Luigi Cavallo and it had to be accepted as such because it committed neither the interviewer, nor the publication where it appeared. To what then do we owe Palia's ambiguities, Titto Ricci asks. Perhaps to his ideological itches, which from time to time and primarily when he is in Bulgaria tend to blur his dispatches? If Palia has the truth in his pocket, let him tell it and if he really does not want to make a 'sensation', let him reveal it at least to the investigating magistrate.

Meanwhile, he should not make insulting statements, for there is a risk of a lawsuit being brought against a man engaged in activities, though he may strongly dislike it, contributing to the information about the so-called "Bulgarian trail". Similar was the tone of the statements made and the interviews given for the local and the international press by defectors from the East who repeatedly named Bulgaria and the Soviet Union as inspirers of the assassination attempt against the Pope. What "objective proofs" did they have that Cavallo did not have in his capacity of specialist on the subject of the secret services as he was presented in the TV film profile of Enzo Biaggi?

'Is there a need,' ends Titto Ricci's letter, 'to tell you my assessment of Judge Martella's investigation? Dear Sir, let me spare you the obvious. Let Palia spare his insinuations because next time I will bring a lawsuit against him.'

* * *

NOTE OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD

In No 8 of February 21 the 'Pogled' newspaper reprinted the interview of Luigi Cavallo for the Italian National Agency for Political and Economic Information (ANIPE) entitled 'Neither Moscow nor Sofia Stand Behind the Assassination Attempt against the Pope'. The Agency presents Cavallo as a specialist on strategic and military problems, member of the Centre for Strategic Studies in Washington, a journalist and writer well familiar with the mechanisms and the role of the secret services in the West. In his inter-

view Luigi Cavallo adduces arguments placing under suspicion the version of 'the hand of Moscow and Sofia' being involved in the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II. Dwelling on a number of details and aspects of the judicial investigation and the role of the secret services in the anti-Bulgarian campaign in Italy and in other countries, Cavallo draws many conclusions about the political implications of Sergei Antonov's arrest in Rome and the insinuations with regard to our country, to the Soviet Union and to the countries of the socialist community. Cavallo and the above-said publication were mentioned several times, mainly by Italian journalists, at the meeting of Boyan Traikov, Director General of the Bulgarian News Agency (BTA) with Bulgarian and foreign journalists in Sofia on March 4, 1983. In their questions and statements some representatives of the western mass media made insinuations and even directly accused Luigi Cavallo and the ANIPE for the interview. In his dispatch from Sofia the 'Giornale Nuovo' correspondent Guido Palia commented on the 'Pogled' publication and placed under suspicion both Luigi Cavallo and the advisability of the interview taken by ANIPE.

*'Pogled' newspaper, No 13
March 28, 1983*

THE TRAILS LEAD TO THE CIA

The American Trail Grows Clearer

Paris, January 3 (BTA correspondent V.Mitev) — In its latest issue 'L'Humanite Dimanche' printed a commentary entitled 'The American Trail of Disinformation' which reads:

'Do you know the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Georgetown? Probably not. However, for several years now this research centre jointly with the Hoover Institute has been very much interested in us and in the Italians.

'What has this got to do with us? And with what is going on in Italy? Above all, the current "discoveries" about the "Bulgarian trail" in the assassination attempt against the Pope appeared first in 'Rome Daily American', a Rome newspaper published in English. In its issue of September 30, 1979 the 'Inquirer' magazine wrote that 'Rome Daily American' is perhaps better known for its generous benefactor — the CIA.

'Inquirer' explains that in 1969 the newly appointed US Ambassador in Rome Graham Martin ordered a new transfer from the secret funds to be made for 'Rome Daily American'. But what has it to do with Georgetown? The fact that the CSIS has specialized in delivering free of charge "articles on communism" to the newspapers printed in English. In 1976, three months before the elections in Italy, the CSIS, according to 'Inquirer', organized a conference on this occasion. The organizing team was composed of William Colby, Clara Booth-Luce and a journalist, Claire Sterling by name.

'Claire Sterling was employed until 1968 by the 'Reporter' magazine which stopped publication that year, and which specialists refer to as a "decisive voice in the cold war". Just before the elections in Italy the 'Rome Daily American' printed an article by Claire Sterling about "Moscow's gold" flowing into the safes of the Italian Communist Party. Many Italian journalists received a copy of the article with the "compliments of the US Embassy".

In his article 'Where Does the Trail Point to — East or West?' printed in the 'Otechestven Front' newspaper of January 3, 1983, Dimiter Shishmanov stresses:

Which organizations and external forces stand behind the assassin?

On May 11, 1981 the 'Cumhuriyet' newspaper reported that the US Embassy in Ankara was showing a lively interest in the activities of the youth divisions of the Nationalist Movement Party, of which Mehmet Ali Agca was an activist. Agca even delivered lectures in the town of Malatya on the movement's strategy for members of the youth societies of the Movement. But others had delivered the lectures of instruction from which the terrorist learned. In the same issue of 'Cumhuriyet' we read that through the mediation of the US Embassy in Ankara US lecturers had delivered lectures for activists of the youth societies of Turkes's Party.

In its issue of October 15 and December 3, 1982 the same newspaper described in detail the activities of the CIA agent and employee in the US Embassy in Ankara Ruzi Nazar. The paper of December 3 wrote thus: 'Everyone knew who Ruzi Nazar was and what he was doing. He struck up many friendships in Turkey. He spoke Turkish very well. He made friends with the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party Turkes. He was his bosom friend. He helped appoint one of Turkes's daughters in an American airlines company. When Nazar left the army he did not interrupt his friendship with Turkes and with the circles close around him. The documents of the Turkes-Ruzi Nazar connection are kept in the files of the Nationalist Movement Party. Whoever is interested may find them in file 106 of the indictment.' 'Cumhuriyet' explains that at present Ruzi Nazar is in the FRG, in Bonn and continues working among the subdivisions of Turkes's neo-fascist party in West Europe. The reports and commentaries in the newspaper on this CIA agent are entitled 'Ruzi Nazar — a CIA Agent in the Ranks of Young Followers of Turkes.' Again according to 'Cumhuriyet' of October 15, 1982, Ruzi Nazar has a deputy in Ankara, another CIA agent, who lives in the Bahceli Evler quarter in Ankara, near Karakol stop, and works with the activists of the extreme right wing whose main terrorist kernel are the 'Grey Wolves'.

On January 7, 1982 many Turkish newspapers printed a report

on another CIA agent, Frank Terpil, who sold guns to the 'Grey Wolves'.

And in late September 1982, just when Washington gave the signal to launch the vast anti-Bulgarian and anti-socialist campaign, the CIA Director William Casey arrived in Turkey. ('Cumhuriyet', October 15, 1982).

Moscow, January 5 (TASS). — Under the title 'The Trail Leads to Langley' 'Pravda' carries an article about the role of the US special services in the slander campaign against Bulgaria and the USSR. (Langley — a suburb of Washington, D.C. where the headquarters of the CIA are located.) The paper notes that the Turkish neo-fascist Agca, who was found guilty in the assassination attempt against the Pope of Rome, committed on May 13, 1981, was sentenced to life imprisonment by an Italian court a long time ago. 'Since he has been behind bars, no one has seen him except the prison authorities and members of the Italian special services,' the article points out. 'He has not shown himself to journalists. Yet in spite of this, almost every day Agca has been delivering to the press through some "semi-official" channels ever new fabrications, on the basis of which almost the entire Western propaganda has been trumpeting far and wide that the arms for his attempt on the life of the Pope of Rome were provided to him by "Bulgaria's secret services". On the basis of that "solid" evidence, the Bulgarian citizen Sergei Antonov was arrested in Rome (a year and a half after the attempt) and has been kept in prison since November last year. On the same "grounds", attempts are being made to implicate the Soviet Union likewise in the assassination attempt, in one way or another.

'Both Bulgaria and the Soviet Union have rejected with indignation these totally absurd accusations and have assessed them at their true worth', 'Pravda' emphasizes.

'The speculation itself that there can be in the socialist countries any circles which may be in any way implicated in these terrorist acts is absurd in its very essence,' 'Pravda' writes. 'This is contradictory to the policy and the ideology of our society.'

The paper points out that the position of the Roman Catholic Church on the questions of war and peace is not to the liking of those circles through whose fault the arms race has recently reached enormous proportions.

'Quite a lot of effort was expended in Washington, D.C. to compel the Holy See to support Reagan's slogan to the effect that there are matters more important than peace ... However, such support was denied. After that, the White House tried to "draw in the reins" of the US Catholic bishops, who qualified the nuclear war as amoral. To this day, the Catholic priests in the USA and in the other NATO countries who are taking part in the drive for peace and disarmament, are being persecuted.'

It was not fortuitous that the US President, who declared a 'crusade' against communism, said in a speech before collaborators of the CIA in June 1982 that it was to them that the role of a front rank detachment in that crusade was being assigned. He said that they were in the front line of that struggle.

'It is only a blind man who would fail to see in the present anti-Bulgarian and anti-Soviet campaign the hand of those "crusaders" from Langley,' 'Pravda' says in a concluding passage.

NATO Actions behind a Smokescreen

Moscow, January 4 (BTA correspondent Nikolai Koev) — In his commentary, broadcast by the first channel of the Central Soviet Television the TASS political analyst Anatoly Krassikov pointed out that the fabrications around the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II launched a vast-scale ideological subversion. It aims at presenting the socialist countries as enemies to the Vatican and thus inciting the Catholics against the communists. And the main thing, Krassikov emphasized, is to create a smokescreen for turning Italy into a launching pad for NATO's aggressive plans and a target for a retaliatory strike.

Explaining the story of the ill-concocted slander against socialist Bulgaria Krassikov points out that Sergei Antonov was arrested after the Turkish terrorist Agca, sentenced to life imprisonment, was said to have named Antonov as his accomplice. I write 'was said to have named' because no one but the investigating magistrates and the officers of the Italian special services had heard those statements. By the way, during the trial Agca said nothing of the sort. And now when he is in prison we have only the 'version' provided by the same Italian special services which, as it is generally known, act in closest contact with the CIA, that has had a hand in scores of assassinations.

'All this makes us recall the farce staged in 1933 against another Bulgarian, Georgi Dimitrov,' the TASS political analyst went on to say. 'The trial in Leipzig then turned the tables on those who stage-managed it — the German fascists. The nazis wanted to compromise the communists, accusing them of the Reichstag fire, and as a result found themselves in the dock. Now the torch of anti-communism is being carried by the US subversion centres and by those willing to serve them. By the way, the Italian counter-intelligence is subordinated to Defence Minister Lagorio and the press in and outside Italy has qualified him as one of America's closest friends.'

In conclusion Anatoly Krassikov said that the anti-communists of 1933 prepared the aggression against the first socialist state. The anti-communists half a century later are now preparing an aggression against the countries of the socialist community. They obviously do not like the appeals for peace and disarmament supported by all people of good will, the Catholics included. Obviously, their plans are failing. The public will not allow itself to be deceived.

Nikola Dinev



Following the 'Bulgarian trail'

The Story of the Decade

Helsinki, February 11 (BTA) — In its issue of February 5, 1983 the bourgeois Finnish newspaper 'Helsingin Sanomat' prints an article entitled 'The KGB and the Attempt on the Pope's Life' by the well known journalist Jukka Rislani.

'Journalists quoting one another compose the story of the decade.'

'The Soviet Union is engulfing Finland! The whole of Europe is being Finlandized! Western journalists are being "brain-washed"! A KGB agent shoots at the Pope! An Arab gang of murderers is after Reagan! A Third World War begins!'

What is this? A plot for science fiction or for adventure films? Neither the one nor the other, but the latest conclusions of authoritative research institutes and of journalists treated absolutely seriously in the world press and even in Finland.

Recently almost every day has seen the appearance of reports speculating with the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II. In brief, we are invited to believe that the rightist Turkish terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca who shot at the Pope in St Peter's Square on May 13, 1981, was a Bulgarian agent and that the Soviet KGB was at the bottom of it all.

Let us meet those who started making this unsavoury brew. First was the American journalist C. Sterling who had been living in Italy for many years. Terrorism is her favourite subject. It was the subject of the book she wrote in 1981, entitled 'The Network of Terror', the best known in this field to date. Sterling accuses Moscow of being at the bottom of international terrorism. More specifically, she put on the same list the World Peace Council, based in Finland, and the Chilean emigres. In this connection Sterling expresses her conviction that Olof Palme, Sweden's Prime Minister, defends the terrorists and that Stockholm is their shelter.

The Reagan Administration rejoiced over the book. The US Congress set up a sub-commission to deal particularly with the

issues of terrorism.

Despite its multiple efforts so far the CIA has not been able to submit direct proofs to the Administration in support of the Soviet Union's involvement in international terrorism. On the contrary, even in the past few months the CIA was compelled to print announcements and make confessions to the effect that it was not quite certain the Soviet Union and Bulgaria were involved in the assassination attempt against the Pope.

The sources of information to which journalist C. Sterling refers in her works are representatives of the governments of Israel and of other western countries. She mentions names like Brian Cruier, Robert Moss, M. Ledeen and A. Borchgrave.

Of these names Cruier and Moss arouse special interest. They are, as the reference books assert, investigators and journalists. They come from Australia. They were the chiefs of the mysterious FBI information office, which often amazed everyone with its knowledge. Its reports were used everywhere, even in Finland, until 1975 when British newspapers revealed they were the product of the CIA. With CIA money the mysterious pair Cruier-Moss organized at the same time the well known Institute for International Conflicts Studies (ISU). At the same time Moss was M. Thatcher's speech writer.

Moss launched the campaign which may be called 'The Soviet Union and Terrorism' in the beginning of 1981 in the 'Paris Match' magazine, known in Finland for the sharp tone of its articles against this country.

All five of them — Sterling, Cruier, Moss, Ledeen and Borchgrave addressed the US Congress at different times to develop their thesis on international terrorism. For instance they spread the version that Agca must be an agent of the socialist countries.

In 1977 Moss took part in setting up the Heritage Foundation which was most probably the influential force behind the birth of the Reagan Administration. Heritage prepares the materials on which Reagan's policies are based and gives advice about future steps.

Last year the Heritage Foundation declared it would launch a campaign against the United Nations. The explanation was that the UN 'helps' terrorism and 'espionage' and that naturally it is backed by Moscow.

The Centre for Strategic International Studies at the Georgetown University (CSIS) collaborates with the ISU. Reagan's advisers Richard Allen and Roger Fontane, notorious for their theory of the danger of Finlandization of all Europe, come from there.

The first 'report' that the socialist countries were at the bottom of the assassination attempt against the Pope was printed in May 1981 by the 'Giornale nuovo' newspaper in Milan, in which Ledeen worked as a journalist. The report came from a 'Vatican source' which in turn drew on 'diplomatic sources'. The story was given greater attention only after the Thames British TV company devoted a special programme to it. The same newspaper was the source of information.

Last autumn the 'Reader's Digest', the magazine with the largest circulation in the world, printed two articles that immediately aroused much noise. First Sterling published her version of the attempt on the Pope's life; next Baron explained that the KGB stands behind the peace movement in the West.

Next appeared the journalist Marvin Calb. He made a programme for the NBC TV company based on Sterling's materials. Representatives of the Italian intelligence services went to the USA to talk with Calb and Sterling. Calb flew over to Rome to organize a press conference.

Everything was already in its place. Sterling had said in her book that the KGB employs Turkish terrorists and that the terrorists get guns in Bulgaria. The NBC interviewed Moss who linked the shots at the Pope with other plots — with the 'gang of murderers from Libya' of which no evidence had been obtained.

Moss said that a member of that gang of murderers, judging from the photo, was in St Peter's Square when the shots were fired at the Pope. How did he know that? Although there was no answer, the police had already taken a photo of the Libyan in question and he was declared wanted.

Next Calb noticed that one of the men in the square is the spit and image of an employee of the Bulgarian Airlines office in Rome ... The man was promptly arrested.

I quote you, you quote me. This is how things go. They quote one another and corroborate their 'reports', based on the articles of their friends.

Who Fabricates Accusations and How

Moscow, February 11 (BTA) — The Soviet weekly 'Za rubezhom' No 6 (February 4-10) reprints an article from the Washington magazine 'Covert Action', which provides information on who and how fabricates the accusations against Bulgaria and the other socialist countries of 'involvement in terrorism'. The article in 'Covert Action' is preceded by a brief editorial note of 'Za rubezhom', which reads:

'On instructions from Washington the Italian authorities detained the Bulgarian national Sergei Antonov, who was preposterously accused of "complicity in the attempt" on the life of Pope John Paul II despite the numerous facts testifying to his innocence. From the exposures in the article of the Washington magazine 'Covert Action' it becomes clear that CIA agents under the guise of journalists take a most active part in the preparation of the slander campaign not only against Bulgaria but against the other socialist countries as well.'

The article says that the readers who want to obtain more thorough knowledge on the subject could start with the urgent arrival in Rome on the eve of the death of Pope John Paul I (September 1978), of a person called Michael Ledin (Ledeen). It was quite natural, the article goes on, that Ledeen proved to be in the front ranks of those who were trying hard to sell the idea of a 'Soviet plot for the assassination of the Pope of Rome'.

This history of the international terrorist network created by Israel and the CIA started with James Engelton, a former chief of CIA counter-intelligence department. As a resident in Rome he had recruited 60 agents in the mass media and directed the cooperation between the CIA and the Israeli counter-intelligence MOSAD. In the course of 20 years many of Engelton's agents in the mass media were recruited among the Rome-based staffs of 'Newsweek' and 'Washington Post'. Claire Sterling was one of the

agents; Michael Ledeen is her protege; and Robert Moss a collaborator.

The subject of a 'Soviet plot' appeared first in the CIA-controlled 'Giornale nuovo' newspaper in Milan in May 1981. Ledeen was its correspondent at the time. The report drew attention when the Thames British TV company devoted a special programme to this theme referring to 'Giornale nuovo' as a source.

Afterwards the Senate sub-commission on security and terrorism presided over by senator Delton suggested to Claire Sterling, Michael Ledeen and Robert Moss to make statements before it. They all unanimously declared that the Turk Agca (sentenced to life imprisonment by the Italian court for the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II, — Za rubezhom's note) had not acted alone and the fact that he passed through Bulgaria was a proof the 'communists' were involved in the assassination.

Robert Moss drew attention first in 1973 as an Australian journalist writing about Chile under President Allende. (As it became known later, during that period, on CIA instructions, Moss had published slanderous materials about the Popular Unity government in Chile — Za rubezhom's note.) During the 1950s Claire Sterling worked for the CIA-controlled 'Reporter' magazine; later she started making appearances at various conferences along with CIA Director William Colby as a specialist on Italian political life. Michael Ledeen has the amazing ability to belittle serious and complicated social problems. He had first become known to the public in the 1970s as a researcher who had discovered the 'wisdom' of Benito Mussolini. Once he said in the Washington University (St. Louis) that fascism could be an entertainment.

Marvin Calb resorts to the same rather suspicious method on September 21 in the NBC broadcast 'The Man Who Shot at the Pope: a Study of Terror'. This time the face of another man in the crowd was selected and he was said to bear a striking resemblance to an employee of the Bulgarian Airlines.

In his broadcast Calb repeatedly referred to Claire Sterling's article in the September issue of 'Reader's Digest' entitled 'A Plot to Kill the Pope'. The article is an example of applying the 'principles of uncovering Soviet plots' first published in Sterling's book 'The Network of Terror' which has become the Bible of the journalists supplying disinformation. Here are the 'rules' she has formulated to detect the plots:

1. If the terrorist is obviously 'red' he is under the control of Moscow.

2. If the terrorist is obviously reactionary (from the right-wing camp) he secretly collaborates with the 'reds' and is controlled by Moscow.

3. If the weapons used were made in the Soviet Union it is a certain proof that the terrorist acted under control from Moscow.

4. If the weapons used were made by NATO Sterling can 'trace' by their registration numbers that they had been stolen by the 'Red Brigades' from a NATO base — and Moscow controls the Brigades.

5. If all available data lead to an opposite conclusion — for example, that the explosion at the Railway Station in Bologna was organized by the rightists and that Agca is simply a common criminal with rightist views, we must remember that the 'reds' and the rightist terrorists act jointly ...

The Prime Source of the Lie

It is the CIA that is the prime source of the great lie about a 'Bulgarian complicity' in the attempt on the Pope's life.

This is not just a logical supposition. Corroborative facts and evidence are to be found in the publications of the US, West European and Turkish press, too.

It is common knowledge that the anti-Bulgarian and anti-socialist campaign developed on a large scale following the publication of an article by the American journalist Claire Sterling in 'Reader's Digest' and the 'documentary' shown by the TV company of the USA NBC on the 'Bulgarian connection'.

It is exactly the CIA that undertook to supply the fabrications about the 'Bulgarian trail' for both the article and the film; and it was under its supervision that the great lie was concocted.

The CIA had employed the 'Reader's Digest' and the NBC to start spreading invented 'facts and evidence' in support of a thesis having a definite, pre-determined aim. It helped them collect such 'facts and evidence', even by offering them the services of its experts. As 'The New York Times' of January 26, 1983 reads, one of these experts, Paul Henze, had been sent to Turkey after the assassination attempt in Rome with the task of seeking for something 'connecting Agca with Bulgaria'. 'The New York Times' and a broadcast of the CBS TV company, re-transmitted by Radio Free Europe on January 11, 1983 gave the following facts about Paul Henze: he had been CIA's resident in Turkey, an assistant to Brzezinski in the US National Security Council, and is at present adviser to the RAND corporation which employs experts such as him for special studies.

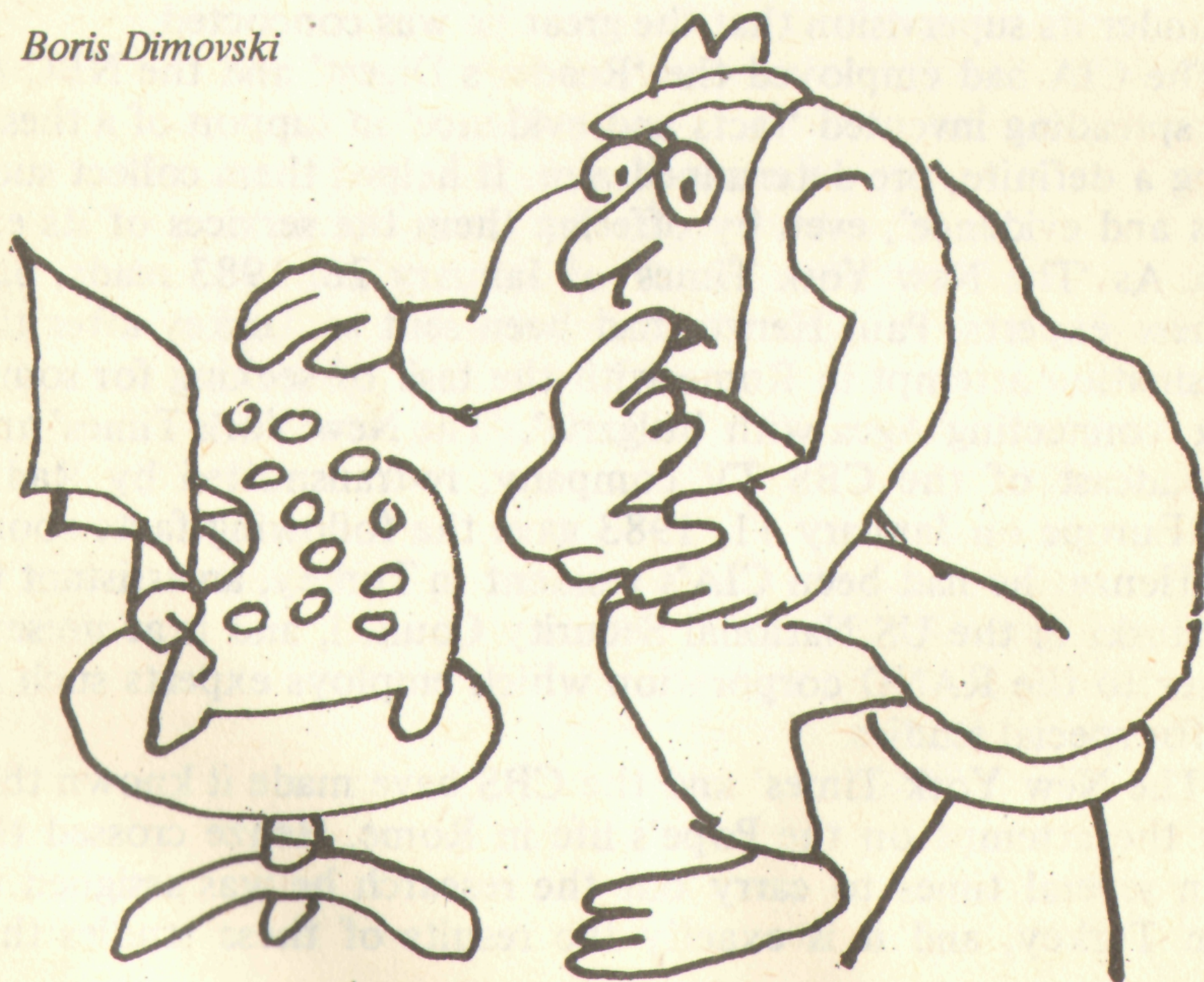
'The New York Times' and the CBS have made it known that after the attempt on the Pope's life in Rome, Henze crossed the ocean several times to carry out the research he was assigned to do in Turkey, and it is exactly the results of these studies that

form the basis of both the 'Reader's Digest' publication and the NBC's 'documentary'. It is noted likewise that the data collected by Henze had also been made available to 'The New York Times', to 'Newsweek', and to Brzezinski and Kissinger, too, who base their arguments on them in maintaining the thesis of an alleged 'Bulgarian trail' said to lead 'to Moscow'.

It is not clear exactly what Henze has found out, but judging from what 'Reader's Digest' and the NBC had to say in support of the large-scale anti-socialist subversion, he has not found out anything. For there is nothing to be found about a 'Bulgarian connection' in the criminal act of May 13.

Dimiter Shishmanov
Narodna Armiya newspaper,
February 11, 1983

Boris Dimovski



WHO WROTE AGCA'S SCENARIO FOR HIM?

A Series of Mysterious Events

Rome, January 5 (ANSA) — Some unusual events having occurred of late at the block of flats on 36 Galliani Street, where Bulgarian officials, among them Todor Aivazov, accused of being an accomplice in the attempt on the Pope's life, had lived, made the Bulgarian Embassy in Rome enter a series of protests to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Minister of the Interior.

The Bulgarians claim that since the end of last June there had been about a dozen attempts at housebreaking, some of them successful. The flat of Aivazov, treasurer of the embassy, was also an object of such attempts, before he was summoned back home. The last of the series of housebreaking attempts was recorded some 20 days ago, when an unknown person had broken into a flat and stolen 150,000 lire. The inhabitants of the block had been able to see two or three persons walking away from the house, carrying cameras; they then got into a car with license plates stolen from the Bulgarians. Recently, following the noisy investigation into the attempt on the Pope's life, which culminated in the arrest of Sergei Ivanov Antonov, the house was visited also by a TV team which took some shots.

Rome, January 5 (BTA correspondent Hristo Petrov) — 'Who are these mysterious persons who broke about a dozen times into the house where officials of the Bulgarian Embassy in Rome live? Who has taken such an interest in Aivazov's flat, later described in detail by Mehmet Ali Agca?'

These are but a few of the questions put by many Italian newspapers today.

The 'Unita' headlines: 'A turnabout in the Antonov case. Mysterious "visits" to the Bulgarians' lodgings. Flats repeatedly searched, then described by Agca.'

The counsel for the defence of the Bulgarian official (Sergei

Antonov — correspondent's note) insists that a series of mysterious events had been recorded at the end of 1981 and in 1982, which lead to the conclusion that Agca's confessions (which are now ripping at the seams) have been 'directed' or somehow 'suggested'. What is meant is that mysterious 'visits' have been repeatedly paid by unknown persons, both before and after Agca's confessions, to the block of flats where all Bulgarian officials live, Aivazov among them, whose flat was described in detail by the Turkish assassin to support the truthfulness of his story.

The truth is that this is what the Bulgarian side immediately proclaimed, but now some new details about these strange events come to the foreground. The 'visits' to the block of flats where Aivazov lived (owned by the Bulgarian Embassy) were numerous, possibly about a dozen, almost all of them in 1982, especially frequent in the autumn, several weeks before the Bulgarian official Antonov was arrested. As far as it is known, regular complaints have been lodged with the police and official protests have been entered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During one of these 'visits', shortly before Antonov's arrest, the tenants of the block had been able to put down the number on the license plates of the car in which the mysterious persons drove away. The number was false, since it proved to belong to another car, owned by a private person. According to the Bulgarian side, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had given no answer at all to the protest notes', the 'Unita' points out.

'Grave doubts arise about the statements of the "repenting" Turk,' was one of the headlines of the 'Paese Sera' newspaper.

'Alongside the talks Ali Agca had had in prison (incidentally, he had been sentenced to one year of solitary confinement), with unidentified persons from the secret services, permitted by God knows who, another "straw" is now being added which greatly increases the suspicions. These "visits" had been paid at the time when there were no suspicions, i.e. when no one had yet started talking about a Bulgarian trail in the assassination attempt. One date we can be sure of — the beginning of October 1982, some two months before the Balkan official Antonov was arrested, a dark-blue Alfetta stopped in front of the entrance of a block of flats in Galliani Street, bearing license plates Roma W 13933. Two or three persons got out and headed without hesitation for Aiva-

zov's flat (he was out working at the embassy at that time) and broke in. They stayed there for some minutes and got out quickly. Some of the inhabitants of the block saw them, and beside the make and number of the car, they also noticed that the mysterious visitors carried cameras. One cannot be sure how many times Aivazov's flat has been broken into, but there is no doubt that such visits were not an exceptional occurrence at the block. Many Bulgarian Embassy employees had complained that they had been finding the doors of their flats broken. They were so many, that at least ten protest notes had been sent to our Ministry of Foreign Affairs within a year. A whole bunch of documents which, as far as we know, are still lying on some official's desk at the ministry, and what is more important, have so far received no answer,' the daily points out.

What Did They Talk about in Agca's Cell?

Rome, January 10 (BTA correspondent Hristo Petrov) — The latest issue of the Italian magazine 'Espresso' carries an article by Pier Luigi Ficconeri headlined 'Guess Who Is Coming to the Cell?' In it the author offers 'a full record of the visits the assassin Agca received in prison.'

According to his sentence, Agca was to spend the first year in solitary confinement. The neo-fascist was put alone in a cell in the Ascoli Piceno prison.

'At the end of September 1981 on the occasion of the annual holiday of the prison warders the Bishop of Ascoli Monsignor Morgante asked to be allowed to talk with the perpetrator of the assassination attempt against the Pope. The talk lasted for about two hours. The Right Reverend did not visit Agca any more. Thereafter it is Father Saverio, the chaplain of the Marino del Tronto prison who is entrusted with the task to talk and keep in contact with the Pope's assassin, and he keeps shuttling between the Turk's cell and the bishopric.

'On November 12 the same year Agca's solitary confinement was broken for a second time. The little cell was visited by workers of the Spalvieri enterprise in Ascoli Piceno, which produces carpets, plastics and soft fire-proof lining materials. The Turk's prison cell was renovated. Why all these preventive measures? To alleviate the hard life of the notorious prisoner, or to prevent him from committing suicide by smashing his head against the wall, as the Ministry of Justice claims now?

'A little more than a month later, on December 29, Agca had a third visit — the most alarming of all. These were people of the secret services who introduced themselves: Major Petrucelli of SISMI (Intelligence and Security Service with the Ministry of Defence — correspondent's note) and Dr. Bonagura of SISDE (Information and Security Service with the Ministry of Internal

Affairs — correspondent's note). They presented an official permission signed by Dr Giangreco from the 'Preventive and Penal Institutes Department (with the Ministry of Justice - correspondent's note). It is known for certain that on December 29 the two secret agents spent a long time in Agca's cell. What did they want from the Turk, and what did they offer him in return? The first answer came 35 days later.

'The day was February 2, 1982. During his visit lawyer Pietropaolo of Ascoli (who for some time had been the official counsel for the defence of the terrorist) urged Agca to cooperate with the investigators, and Agca asked him some strange questions such as 'If I tell what I know, how much will my sentence be reduced?' Pietropaolo: 'I don't know, it depends, you may serve 20—25 years instead of life imprisonment ...' Upon which Agca replied: 'That much? The "services" promised that if I talked, I would serve ten years at the most.' Later the same day the young assailant met the investigating magistrate Ilario Martella for the first time. At this first meeting he started telling about Bulgaria. 'Yes, I was in Sofia, too.' He did not say anything more, however. Then Martella played his only trump-card to make him speak out. 'I cannot promise you anything, but you know that a new law concerning the verdicts of repentants is about to be passed. Who knows, maybe an article can be found there covering your case, too. There are people in Rome who expect me.'

'In the capital the Minister of Internal Affairs Rognoni was expecting the answers to these questions, too. It is exactly then that he held consultations with experts from the various parties, hinting at the possibility that the law might be applied for those who had begun to cooperate with the authorities after being convicted. The political leaders with whom the Minister had consultations asked for time, consulted their secretaries and did their best to make out who the Minister was talking about, and in whose favour the point would be stretched. All were unanimous that the person in question was Alfredo Bonavita, one of the leaders of the Red Brigades, who had denounced terrorism. The experts returned to Rognoni and stated that they agreed with expanding the proposed benefits from the law, and asked if this concerned Bonavita. Rognoni's answer was that it was not only him, but someone else, too, but he could not tell his name, for he was a very special prisoner. Evidently he meant Agca. By the end of spring the Turk started talking. This was the beginning of the Bulgarian trail.'

Paris, January 5 (BTA correspondent V.Mitev) — 'The Bulgarian Trail Has Collapsed'. That is the title of an extensive commentary 'L'Humanite' carries today by its correspondent in Rome Alain Wasmès.

'Today when Ali Agca's accusations seem to be collapsing,' the correspondent writes, 'what attracts attention are the circumstances in which those accusations emerged. The Italian Defence Minister Lagorio revealed these circumstances without delay during the deliberations in the Italian Parliament of the "international aspects of the assassination attempt against the Pope". He said that Agca had in fact started making confessions to an agent of the Italian secret services in the prison at Ascoli Piceno in December 1981. According to the words of the Minister the magistracy had supposedly permitted that visit but the tribunal in Rome categorically denies this. So Judge Martella blocked at the very last moment a new visit by officials of the Italian secret services, this time accompanied by representatives of the Turkish secret services.'

How many times has Ali Agca been visited, bearing in mind that as a prisoner serving a life sentence, he was supposed to be in complete isolation for at least a year? What was the purpose of those visits?

The counsel for the defence of Sergei Antonov do not doubt, the correspondent of 'L'Humanite' notes, that Ali Agca's charges against the Bulgarian employees have been 'suggested' to him. In these circumstances, he observes, one cannot but ask oneself, just as the columnist covering legal proceedings for one of the biggest Italian newspapers, 'Repubblica', did. Wrote he: 'It is obvious that Antonov has nothing to do with the shooting in St Peter's Square, or at least with what Ali Agca says. Today those conducting the investigation should collate some questions which suddenly cropped up during the inquiry. Why has the Turkish assassin had to fabricate the 'Bulgarian trail'? And in doing this who provided him with the elements that misled the investigators themselves? There is a danger of the Bulgarian trail leading up to another trail which might implicate the Italian secret services and political figures.'

Prague, January 5 (BTA correspondent V.Mitseva). Today the 'Rude Pravo' newspaper carries a large article headlined 'Who Commissioned This ...?' by the first deputy editor-in-chief Zdenek Horzeni on the slander campaign against Bulgaria.

It is obvious that there is a division of labour between the centres for political subversion of the North-Atlantic pact which plan the actions of the ideological warfare against the socialist countries, Horzeni writes. In Washington the theory on 'international terrorism' is being elaborated with the purpose of discrediting the anti-imperialist forces, and above all the socialist countries, while Rome supplies the emotional 'arguments' and 'concrete' examples; a convenient opportunity for this purpose was provided by the assassination attempt against the Pope.

There is no doubt that the forces who have a stake in liquidating the process of easing international tension, look for all means possible, various slanders included, to lessen the impact of the peaceful policy pursued by the USSR and the other socialist countries.

All this goes to show that the most diverse US secret and non-secret services engaged in the psychological warfare waged against the socialist countries are those who are fuelling the groundless accusations and attacks.

These are actions which come within the category of military psychosis, of the present-day 'crusade' against communism.

Paris, January 6 (BTA correspondent V.Mitev) — 'What has remained today of the "Bulgarian trail", resting completely on the "confessions" of the Turkish assassin Ali Agca?' — L'Humanite's correspondent in Rome Alain Wasmès asks in his commentary in today's paper, headlined 'Suggested Confessions'.

'What is exactly the part played by the Italian secret services in the "confessions" made by Agca, the perpetrator of the attempt on the Pope's life? Was it they who suggested to him to involve Bulgaria in this affair? Was it they who provided him with ready-to-patch-up "evidence"? Such are the difficult questions that crop up during the investigation of the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1981,' the correspondent notes.

The French journalist points out that it was exactly after these visits that Agca began his 'confessions', describing in minutest detail the flats of the Bulgarians.

Moscow, January 21. (BTA correspondent Hristo Ignatievski). — In its issue No 4 the 'Novoe Vremya' magazine published a note by L.Nikolaev. The author comments on what 'The Washington

Post' wrote with regard to the insistent statements made by Italian Defence Minister Lellio Lagorio about the 'complicity' of Sofia and Moscow in the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II. The magazine qualifies these statements as fabrications.

The note states that a similar, to put it mildly, insistence, choked also the Italian government officials who termed Lagorio's statement 'rash' and 'irresponsible'. It goes on to say that 'The Washington Post' had tried to translate Lagorio's accusations into the language of current politics. 'And here is the result,' the note says, 'parliamentary elections are likely to be held ahead of schedule in Italy in the spring, and some functionaries of the Socialist Party are very keen on succeeding in them.' The American newspaper writes that by casting a shadow over the Russians, socialists in Italy could hope to put in a difficult position some of the more influential communists, with whom they are competing for a part of the votes, as well as demonstrate their energy and confidence among more conservative voters.

The aim is evident, the author of the note emphasizes. But it is an old, dishonourable and a doubtful way of amassing political capital by finding 'Moscow's hand' everywhere.

A Statement by Antonov's Lawyers

Sofia, January 9 (AP). The Bulgarian News Agency BTA announced yesterday that Antonov's lawyers Giuseppe Consolo and Adolfo Larussa had arrived on Friday in Sofia to inform the authorities of the Balkan Bulgarian Airlines about the 'course of the investigation against Antonov'. At the Balkan Airlines office the two lawyers had met with representatives of the BTA, the radio and television. The Agency quotes Consolo and Larussa's statements that the visit by representatives of 'the Italian secret services in prison is an indisputable fact confirmed by the Italian Defence Minister'. According to the Agency the two lawyers said: 'We believe — and this is very important for us — that on the one hand, the visit by representatives of the secret services had not been necessary, and on the other, that it was immediately after that visit that Agca's memory was refreshed and they wrested from him confessions which directed the inquiry against Antonov.'

During their meeting with representatives of the mass media in Bulgaria, the two Italian lawyers stressed that if Martella rejected their plea for the release of Antonov they would 'immediately turn to the Court of Freedom'.

According to BTA, Consolo and Larussa also said the following: 'If Martella had any other proof which we do not know of, we shall all the same make serious efforts to clarify the truth. We are sure that we shall disprove the new evidence, because an innocent man cannot all of a sudden explain facts dating two years back. Usually it is the guilty ones who have a ready-made alibi'.

The Perjurer Gets into a Muddle

Rome, January 8 (H. Petrov, correspondent of the BTA). Comparing facts and documental photographic material presented by the lawyers who defend Sergei Antonov, the newspapers 'Unita', 'Paese sera', 'Repubblica' and 'Corriere della sera' of today arrive at the conclusion that the Turkish terrorist Agca had lied to the investigating authorities.

The four dailies draw attention to the following four circumstances: the Turkish neo-fascist condemned to life imprisonment alleged that Sergei Antonov and Todor Aivazov 'took him round Rome, including to the spot of the attempted assassination of the Pope in a Fiat 124 car, what colour he did not remember'. If this was the case that should have either been Antonov's private car or the official car of the Balkan Airlines office, the newspapers note. They add forthwith that Antonov's private car was a bright blue Zhiguli with (a Bulgarian — correspondent's note) licence plate No AB 2784 whereas the official car had on it the inscription 'Balkan' and a characteristic red signal lamp on its roof according to the requirements set to runway traffic.

'Unita' writes: 'Both cars have their own peculiar features which could hardly be muddled, yet Agca cannot remember them. It is a matter of details, though, and at the current stage precisely the scrutinizing of details is the prime obligation of the judge who should pronounce his decision on the plea for Antonov's release submitted by his lawyers'.

The commentaries carried by the other three dailies are in the same vein.

At the same time, the press informs that the examining magistrate Ferdinando Imposimato interrogated three Bulgarians living in the premises owned by the Bulgarian Embassy at 36 Galiani Street in Rome. They described the circumstances in which unidentified persons 'had visited' their flats while they were away.

Vienna, January 10 (BTA). 'The Italian agents had supplied the evidence' — under this title the Vienna newspaper 'Volksstimme' carries a commentary in connection with the latest facts brought to light in 'the Antonov affair'. 'Ali Agca', the newspaper writes, 'had been informed in minutest detail about the flat of Aivazov, an employee of the Bulgarian Embassy in Rome. That information had been supplied to him by Italian agents', because beginning with the autumn of 1981, the block of flats inhabited by Bulgarian employees in Rome had been broken in fifteen times. Once, writes 'Volksstimme', a number of people with guns and cameras were taken by surprise at Aivazov's home. The Italian Foreign Ministry had duly been notified of all these violations, but nobody took the trouble to react, the newspaper goes on. Naturally, the offenders have never been caught. As soon as they took the case, Antonov's lawyers drew attention to these 'strange' visits, but to no avail. It is only now that these facts have begun to surface, 'Volksstimme' stresses. Firstly, because they have been officially confirmed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and secondly, because Aivazov has an alibi for the period of time for which Agca claims that he had met with him. The secret services of Italian Minister Lagorio obviously had poor luck in concocting 'the Antonov affair', the newspaper emphasizes, because Antonov, too, has an alibi confirmed by dozens of witnesses.

The Strange Neighbour

Rome, February 15 (correspondent of the BTA). Sergei Antonov who has been arrested on ungrounded charges of complicity in the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II had 'a strange' neighbour in the block of flats at 29 Pola Street. The answer to the question who that neighbour was is provided in the article by the journalist Giulio Obici in yesterday's issue of 'Paese sera'. The very sub-heading reads as follows: 'Father Marlion, who has connections with the secret services of the US and Italy, lives in the same block of flats as the Bulgarian Sergei Antonov.'

The article traces down the 'rich' biography of Father Marlion ever since 1933, when he took the decision to devote his life to the fight against communism. In 1944 he got in touch with the OSS, a forerunner of the CIA, and settled in Rome where he published bulletins carrying classified political and economic information. The newspaper quotes an article in 'Espresso' of March 1975 in which it was written that the priest had founded 'a veritable office gathering information concerning chiefly the policy of the Vatican, and destined for foreign centres' among them the CIA with whose boss — Allen Dulles — he corresponded intensively during the '50s.

The publication in 'Paese sera' suggests that it is quite possible that this neighbour had been the informer on the Antonov family, their dwelling, movements and their way of life — data used by the terrorist Agca in his latest evidence concerning the assassination attempt against the Pope.

Other Clues Are Being Sought...

Rome, January 13 (Hristo Petrov, correspondent of the BTA). The Italian press today informs about a new confrontation between Antonov and Agca which took place yesterday, according to unconfirmed reports, and stressed the probability of a new order of arrest being issued against the Bulgarian employee within the frameworks of the investigation against Luigi Scricciolo.

'Paese sera' commented ANSA's announcement of last night about a possible complicity of Antonov in the Scricciolo case: 'It is not for the first time that the name of Scricciolo is being in some way associated with that of Antonov and the Bulgarian Airlines.'

'Repubblica' points out: 'In the torrential stream of rumours and unofficial reports which one day are favourable for the Bulgarian and predict his imminent release, and on the very next day define his circumstances as aggravated, a new hypothesis appeared yesterday partially confirmed by Antonov's lawyers. According to that hypothesis the Bulgarian had not participated in the shooting in St Peter's Square nor in the elaboration of the criminal plan.'

'Antonov's circumstances became worse after continuous interrogations of Scricciolo ... In all probability Sergei Antonov will be the crossing point of the Bulgarian trail which leads to the attempt on the life of John Paul II and the other one, linking Sofia with the espionage subverting the activities of Solidarity and of the Red Brigades carried out by the former trade union activist of the UIL Scricciolo', 'Tempo' points out.

TRUTH ON THE OFFENSIVE

My Client Is Innocent

Rome, January 4 (AP). The lawyer of the Bulgarian accused of complicity in the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II made a statement today to the effect that he had presented more evidence of his client's innocence and that he believes in his release.

'My client is innocent and I have made a plea for his release', said Giuseppe Consolo, Sergei Antonov's lawyer in a telephone interview.

In the meantime, the Italian news agency ANSA announced that Bulgaria had protested before the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of the Interior in connection with harassment of employees of the Bulgarian Embassy in Rome, of which announcements had appeared.

'In the protest the Bulgarian side pointed out that the residential block in which employees of the embassy lived had repeatedly been burglarized since June 1982,' ANSA says quoting diplomatic sources. Called on the phone by AP, employees of the Bulgarian Embassy and of the Italian foreign ministry were not in their offices.

'Todor Aivazov, a former employee at the embassy, involved in the assassination attempt against the Pope, who is now in Bulgaria, also lived in that block of flats', ANSA says.

Justified Hopes

Madrid, January 5 (correspondent of the BTA). Under a big headline 'The Bulgarian Trail Vanishes into Thin Air' the 'Diario-16' newspaper writes in a correspondence from Rome: 'The general impression is that the balloon of the Bulgarian trail begins to deflate.' The conclusion that 'the Bulgarian trail vanishes into thin air' has been repeated in the past couple of days by all information bulletins of the Spanish radio stations. By the very headline of its correspondence from Rome — 'Antonov in All Likelihood Is Not Involved', the Catholic newspaper 'Ya', which had formerly been one of the most zealous Spanish supporters of the anti-Bulgarian campaign in the Italian press, too, is beating a retreat.

Both the newspapers and the bulletins of the other Spanish mass media air the news that S. Antonov will probably be released very soon for lack of evidence against him. The surprising thing is 'the easy manner' in which the news is broken. The reports do not reveal even a shade of compunction or uneasiness on account of professional ethics for having set in circulation an avalanche of slanderous suppositions concerning the Bulgarian national and Bulgaria. One is left with the impression that it is quite normal to handle in such an irresponsible way a procedure involving a citizen of a socialist state who had been arrested on the grounds of the crazy accusations of an ultra-rightist terrorist, whom even the local press had, on a number of occasions, qualified as a psychopath, a schizophrenic, psychically unbalanced, and whose statements, in the words of 'Diario-16' of today 'should not be taken at their face value'.

The answer to these questions is obviously clear to the Spanish democratic public which categorically refused to believe the slander campaign launched against Bulgaria, to the common people who expressed their indignation in letters to the press, to the official circles which did not formulate a single anti-Bulga-

rian statement. Although not thoroughly exhaustive, the answer can be read today in the pages of 'Diarfo—16'. The paper is forced to note that obviously 'all this is a gigantic bluff, patched up by Ali Agca and the Western and Turkish secret services which have supplied Agca with names and situations', admitting immediately after that 'what has been arrived at is nothing else but the acceptance of the thesis expounded at the very beginning by the representatives of the Bulgarian government', and which somewhat later has been confirmed by TASS.

Rome, January 5 (AFP). 'The suspicion that Agca (sentenced to life imprisonment in Italy for his attempt to kill the Pope) had been tipped off in pointing to Bulgarian nationals as being his accomplices, is confirmed from day to day, the 'Repubblica' writes today. Will it become necessary to abandon the prosecution against Sergei I. Antonov and Todor Aivazov, the former arrested on November 25, 1982, the latter — with an order issued for his arrest?

This probability is viewed with anxiety in Italy. It would no doubt discredit the theory about 'the Bulgarian connection' and would provide a totally unexpected denouement.

London, January 5 (V.Kroumov, correspondent of the BTA). Employees of the intelligence and security of the FRG are skeptical as regards the allegations about a 'Bulgarian participation' in the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II — writes today the Bonn correspondent of the 'Guardian', Anna Thomford.

She quotes officials according to whom the evidence of involvement of socialist countries in the attempt on the life of the Pope is circumstantial and, consequently, insufficient. They (the officials — author's note) also expressed doubts concerning the authority and qualification of the Italian security services and referred to a deliberate campaign of misinformation on the part of the Italian authorities.

The same newspaper also tells about the doubts expressed by certain circles in the US regarding the character of the witnesses' evidence presented by the authorities in Rome. Pointing out that the official circles in Washington are keeping ostensibly silent the 'Guardian' correspondent in the US capital Harold Jackson writes that according to a White House official the evidence presented by

various Italian bodies of power is not fully convincing just as the remaining facts of which we know are not convincing.

On his behalf the Washington correspondent of the pro-right 'Daily Telegraph' Richard Beaston writes that a US official who had studied the evidence presented by Italy says that in the US not a single piece of that evidence could serve as the basis for a plausible accusation that Bulgaria and even less so the Soviet Union could stand behind the plot.

The Bulgarian Trail Is Falling Apart

New York, January 19 (correspondent of the BTA). Under a heading to this effect the 'Daily World' carries an article today written by its correspondent Tom Foley which shows the entire groundlessness of the accusations levelled at Sergei Antonov and Bulgaria. The newspaper points to the revelation made public in 'Paese sera' to the effect that Agca's description of Antonov's flat was only made about ten days after agents of the Italian secret services had broken in the flat.

Further on the newspaper notes that the whole story involving the allegations about a 'Bulgarian connection' already seems to throw in confusion even those who most zealously fanned it up until some time ago. When Chiriaco de Mita, General Secretary of the Italian Christian-Democratic Party met late last week in Washington with President Reagan and Secretary of State Shultz, no reference was made to the so called 'Bulgarian connection'.

The meetings in Washington, which were expected to entail tendentious statements have clearly shown that the balloon of slanders had burst and the initiators of the smear campaign had no longer in their possession any arguments, be they fabricated ones, in order to be able to continue that campaign in at least a seemingly trustworthy manner, the newspaper notes.

The Strength of Sergei Antonov

Rome, January 20 (H.Petrov, correspondent of the BTA).

'I am calm. I am armed with patience. I am confident that truth will triumph', this was stated today by Sergei Antonov with the request to convey it to his compatriots.

During today's visit to Sergei Antonov at the Rebibbia prison, Stefan Genev, the Bulgarian consul in Rome, conveyed to him the request of the team of the Bulgarian Television for a short statement.

'My innocence gives me strength', Antonov said, 'to endure firmly the hardships in prison, and the faith that I shall see the day when justice will triumph. For sooner or later, justice will triumph.'

A Letter Received at the BTA Office in Bonn

Bonn, February 22 (correspondent of the BTA). The following letter arrived to the address of the BTA Bonn office:

Sirs,

I should not like to present myself as an omniscient arbiter but, honestly speaking, I cannot agree with the political short-sightedness and lack of true vision demonstrated in Italy and, unfortunately, not only there.

Blinded by their short-term foreign political interests and a greed for power, certain quarters have launched a campaign in connection with the second investigation in Italy of the facts connected with the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II. Of late that campaign has turned into a farce staged with the purpose of inflicting a grave moral damage on the West and the entire Christian world.

Despite the fact that the inquiry could hardly prove what it was driving at, it should have become clear from the very beginning that a non-existent truth cannot be proved. What is even more contradictory and dangerous is the intention to take advantage of an Islamic fanaticist and a representative of the nation which is a synonym of religious incompatibility with Christianity and Catholicism (Ali Agca is a Turk) to this end, a man who under different circumstances would have been one of those who set problems to our country either as members of the Turkish rightist extremists or as gastarbeiter. Instead of punishing that assassin as he deserves and condemning him in public, attempts are being made in all earnest to shift the accusations onto a Christian and in this way to discredit all believers of East and West.

Does it really matter that that Christian comes from a communist country? Will that wipe out the accusation which had smeared the reputation of the Christian world? Shall we pass over in silence the fact that Turkey — an ally of ours and a home count-

ry of Agca, meanly took advantage of the confusion to incriminate as sharing the responsibility for the attempt on the life of the Pope the leader of the Christian Social Union, Franz Josef Strauss, employing to this end 'facts and documents' presented by the Turkish mass media about certain connections between Strauss and the leader of the Nationalistic Movement Party of Turkes.

Gentlemen, I appeal to you to join me in my protest against such a development. I am sending you pages from our report on the problems of terrorism delivered by Mr Mayer* before the NATO Council early in 1982, and I entreat you to give it publicity.

Let the world see that in the FRG, just as in the other NATO countries there are people of sober judgement who see things as they are and not as some would like them to be seen. No doubt some short-sighted people would blame me of treachery. My own conscience and my conviction that by acting in such a way I am serving the interests and supreme goals of my nation, will give me faith and will help me bear the heavy cross.

The letter is not signed. It arrived at the office in English.

I will quote a few excerpts from the photographic copies of part of the report of the above-mentioned Mayer, enclosed in the letter. They are marked NATO — classified.

Terrorism and anarchy in Turkey are gradually dropping to an unprecedented low level. Prior to September 12, there were 23 murders on an average daily. The number of murders has since dropped to one per two days.

Many people who belonged to various terrorist groups have now succeeded in taking refuge abroad. These persons pose a threat to the internal security of the countries in which they are at large. A case in point is Ali Agca who in May 1981 made an attempt to kill Pope John Paul II.

Whereas the activities of the terroristic organizations within the country is to a large extent under control, their members abroad have stepped up their anti-government activities within the countries where they reside. Activities of that sort have been registered in 28 countries. They have taken the form of meetings,

* Richard Mayer, Chairman of the Federal Service for the Observance of the Constitution.

assemblies, demonstrations, marches and night vigils, the dissemination of brochures and pamphlets, hunger strikes, the seizure of Turkish missions.

With money obtained through robberies and by other means the terrorists have organized various commercial firms which serve as cover for their activities or as a link, or for printing organizational documents, as ammunition and other materials depots, for financing the organizations.

Members of the Turkish National Liberation Party and Front with the faction 'Dev Sol' hijacked a plane of the Turkish Airlines on May 24, 1981 on the Istanbul—Ankara flight. They demanded the release of 47 prisoners and a ransom of 500,000 dollars.

* * *

There is no evidence to surmise that there exists an international terrorist network which directs terrorist actions on a world-wide scale, nor is there evidence that the USSR plays a leading role in terrorism. It is all the same known that the Soviet bloc countries train and render material support to individual terrorist organizations, but so far there is no proof that any of them had taken part in an action in the NATO member-countries.

It is known that a representative of the Cuban State Security had helped a Salvadoran communist in organizing revolutionary Salvadoran committees in Canada.

* * *

The investigation carried out by the Italian authorities in connection with the attempt on the life of the Pope has ended with the conclusion that Ali Agca had acted out of his own accord.

This letter which, as it is understood, has been sent by a citizen of the FRG to the Bonn correspondent of the BTA, and especially the photographic copies of a classified NATO report show that at one of its sessions, the NATO men had discussed among themselves the realities, that is to say, they have admitted the fact that the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries have no connections with and do not aid terrorist groups in Western Europe, that Agca had not been assisted by Bulgarian citizens in the assassination attempt against the Pope. However, outside their secret meetings in NATO, they are quite loud-mouthed in discre-

ditioning the socialist countries by propagating that the socialist countries were allegedly organizers and supporters of terrorism in the West, and that the Bulgarians were accomplices in the shooting of the Pope.

An honest citizen of the FRG unmaskes NATO's slanders by a NATO document.

THE CRIMINAL FRAME-UP

Poisoning by News

Stockholm, January 16, (BTA). On December 22, 1982 the 'Norskensflamman' newspaper carried the following headline: 'News Imperialism. An Anti-Soviet and Anti-Bulgarian Provocation', in which one reads the following:

'Yesterday in the course of over ten hours, millions upon millions of men and women were subjected to a veritable poisoning. Not with bad canned food but with something worse — rotten news, i.e. false information designed to set the peoples against one other. Bismarck forfeited a letter to the king of Prussia in order to provoke a war with France in July 1870.'

A whole century later ... the same methods are being used as those used to challenge 'the indignant public opinion' during Hitler's time.

From Washington, the AFP and other Western news agencies went in the air at 4.07 a.m.: 'Pope John Paul II is reported to have said to Secretary of State George Shultz that he believed the KGB (the Soviet security police) was behind the assassination attempt against him last year, a US TV company confirmed on Tuesday.'

According to Cable News Network (CNN) which explained that the information had been supplied to them by the White House, Mr Shultz had reportedly sent a telegram to President Reagan to go on with his half an hour telephone conversation he held on Monday with the Head of the Catholic Church.

A senior official in Reagan's Administration who according to CNN had access to the reports of the intelligence service had explained to a representative of CNN that the role of the Bulgarian security service seemed ascertained, and the role of the KGB was probable.

The Vatican, News at 1.25 p.m.: 'On Wednesday the Vatican refused to comment the news broadcast by the US TV company CNN.'

Madrid, News from AP at 1.29 p.m.: 'US Secretary of State George Shultz used in Wednesday the appellation. 'totally false' concerning the information to the effect that Pope John Paul II had told him that according to him the Soviet KGB was behind the assassination attempt ...'

Commentary of 'Norskensflamman': 'Things are not much more different in Sweden. We have heard the false story being read with an emphasis laid on every syllable in the evening news broadcasts of the radio and TV, hours after the lie had been disproved.

'However, we did not hear a refutation of this. A mean operation padded up with lies against Bulgaria and the Soviet Union serves the purposes of war-mongers. This operation is still in progress. In a hysterical propaganda speech from Rome in the so called News Programme of the television on December 29, Bo Holmstrom continued the offensive of lies against Bulgaria and the Soviet Union.'

Belgrade, January 16 (BTA). The 'Danas' magazine carried a long article by Zhivko Milic under the headline 'The Blue Alfa-Romeo', dealing with the Antonov case, in which it is said among other things: 'Who would think a whole international affair could spring up from a standard Alfa-Romeo parked not far from St Peter's Square in Rome on May 13, 1981? The miracle lies in the fact that not a person knows whether that car really existed except in the imagination of Ali Agca. Or perhaps in the imagination of subtler masters of the special psychological and propaganda warfare. Usually the terrorists and the secret service men possess a technique and qualities which we ordinary people lack. In the fable about the attempt on the Pope's life, it is vice versa. The perpetrators behave in a manner so amateurish that even we can do better, because an assassin heading to kill his victim does not carry in his pockets the telephone numbers of his master and accomplices. In addition to that, Ali Agca allegedly arrived in St Peter's Square in a blue Alfa-Romeo accompanied by the Bulgarian officials Aivazov and Antonov ... Naturally, apart from the anti-Soviet and international components, this propaganda action has internal, purely Italian objectives too — the right wing cannot deal with the Red Brigades therefore efforts are being made to tie up their activities with the secret services of the East European countries...

A Complot for Disinformation

Oslo, January 16 (BTA). The Editor-in-Chief of the Norwegian newspaper 'Dagbladet' Jan Otto Johansen published a commentary in which he examines certain aspects of East-West relations. The journalist also dwells on the question much publicized of late about some kind of Bulgarian participation in the attempt on the Pope's life.

He writes in this connection: 'For us as outside observers it is naturally impossible to assess the essence of the Italian statements. Due to their connections with the most reactionary and neo-fascist circles, the Italian intelligence and counter-intelligence services have never inspired one to believe them implicitly. Some quarters in the West-European intelligence services, are equally sceptical as regards the allegations coming from Italy.'

One cannot rule out the probability of the Italians having fallen victim to a gigantic disinformation complot in order to blacken the image of the new Soviet leadership and in this way legalize the opinion of Reagan's Administration about the Soviet Union.'

Athens, January 18 (BTA). 'Avgi' basing itself on its own information noted on January 14 that the efforts to take advantage of the attempt on the Pope's life for propaganda purposes were criticized in the European Council. The Italian communist MP Giancarlo Pajetta accused the conservatives that they had submitted for discussion a draft resolution which could influence the Italian investigating authorities. A. Alvanos, deputy from the GCP, accused the Christian Democrats who 'are instigating a similar campaign in order to obstruct the Catholics in their intentions to take part in the peace movement.' The Greek socialist and communist deputies had voted against the proposal whereby a compromising draft resolution of the socialist group had been adopted.

The Defence Insists on Antonov's Release

Rome, January 18 (ANSA). The Deputy Prosecutor General Franco Scorza had given negative view regarding the release of Antonov.

Rome, January 20 (correspondent of the BTA). The news agency ANSA announced tonight that Antonov's defence, the lawyers Consolo and Larussa had presented a statement which 'formalizes' the polemics started by them in connection with the airing of the negative view of Deputy Prosecutor General Franco Scorza regarding the plea for the release of the Bulgarian for complete lack of evidence.

'The two lawyers insist that the Prosecutor's Office should establish who could possibly bear responsibility for circulating the news which, in their view, besides violating the secrecy of the inquiry could influence the impartiality of the examining magistrate who has to take such an important decision. They believe that the supposed circulation of the news has created the conviction among the public that Doctor Martella has already taken a negative decision although he has not yet had his say.'

Paris, February 3 (correspondent of the BTA). 'The examining magistrate Ilario Martella obviously does not possess (or at least not yet) a definite proof of Antonov's guilt', says the correspondent of 'Figaro' in Rome, Baudowin Bollaert. The French journalist pointed out that Antonov's lawyers Giuseppe Consolo and Adolfo Larussa 'are two Italian jurists of fine reputation', and that they were absolutely convinced in his innocence. After having reported that the judge rejected the plea of the counsel for the defence of the Bulgarian national for his release from prison because of lack of any grounds for his detention, the correspondent emphasizes the lawyers' words: 'The evidence of ten witnesses is worth more than the allegations of an assassin.'

A Portrait of the Terrorist

Moscow, January 19 (correspondent of the BTA). Under the headline 'A Portrait of the Terrorist' today the 'Literatournaya Gazeta' newspaper carries an article by Alexander Sabov from Paris, which tells some details about the reincarnations of the Turkish terrorist Agca, and the slander campaign launched in the West in connection with the alleged Bulgarian participation in the attempt to kill Pope John Paul II.

When he was arrested in Rome, Agca proved to be a man with unshakable fascist convictions who had perpetrated grave crimes in his homeland, and had fled from prison, the author writes. After his arrest he declared that he had intended to kill the Pope as early as 1979 during the Pope's visit to Turkey, and that in fact this had been the only reason for his gaol-breaking. Besides, Sabov points out, Agca answered these first questions saying that he alone had fired and had had no accomplices.

This was Agca's portrait, the author goes on. An expressionless image with a mask-like face. And then, only a year later that portrait is unrecognizable — Agca has brightened up, he has become very talkative and at the same time has slanted to the left. Two impressive TV expeditions — one British and another American — traced the routes, as it were, of the Turkish fascist this past year bringing home from their distant journey an absolutely new, even unrecognizable portrait. Agca — a fascist? True enough, he had been a member of a neo-nazi party, and of its youth contingent known as The Grey Wolves. But this had been no more than a cover, an assumed personality. Actually, by convictions he was leftist. 'What do our Western concepts of leftist and rightist matter when what we are facing are Islamic terrorists?' a Western newspaper exclaimed some time ago, writes the author further on. In other words that newspaper is insinuating to public opinion that it is such cadre that Moscow is fond of manipulating in order to divert public opinion. They even reached to the conclusion, the

author of the article points out, that Agca had allegedly undergone special training in ... the USSR. Naturally, he has never set foot in our country and shall never be allowed to do so, Sabov says.

Thus, 'Literatournaya Gazeta' sums up, only the accomplices were missing. So it turned out they were eight persons — five Turks and three Bulgarians. And there you are, an amateur's photograph taken at the moment of the shooting at the Pope is produced — is this a sufficient clue — and a Bulgarian citizen, the employee at the Balkan Airlines Sergei Antonov is arrested. Once the picture was published in the press, it turned out that the moustached and bespectacled man was an American tourist. As if by a magic wand that version was abandoned, the author writes. But the 'Bulgarian trail' remained.

But it did not last; it was built on sand, all the more so that during the parliamentary debates, the Italian Defence Minister Agorrio quite suddenly said that for more than a year Agca had been handled by men of the Italian special services.

Is this not something to wonder at: no one is allowed to enter the prisoner's cell without the permission of the judges who are the ones making decision as to the further investigation into the case.

In conclusion the author writes that for over a month an unrelentless campaign has been going on in the Western press and in the air at the same time when seven of Antonov's colleagues have confirmed his alibi and his defence insists on his release from prison. Having received a befitting answer, and facing a probable exposure, now the Western press is wailing — Why did we make such haste and raise all that racket?

Growing Scepticism

New York, January 26 (BTA). The independent left radical weekly newspaper 'Guardian', which comes out in New York, in its issue of January 5 published on almost a whole page Jack Smith's material under a headline to the effect that there is no evidence to connect Bulgaria with the fascist assailant and asking whether the assault against the Pope had been the doing of Sofia. After giving a detailed account of the developments in connection with the attempted assassination of the Pope and all and sundry accusations against the People's Republic of Bulgaria, USSR etc., the writer states that Agca was well known for his connections with the military section of the Turkish fascist nationalist party, known as the Grey Wolves.

He says that the anti-Bulgarian campaign has been fanned up by the sensational press in Italy and by several Western journalists and 'experts'. In conclusion of the extensive article disproving the thesis about a Bulgarian connection in the plot, it is said that so far not a single reliable source has made any serious connection between the shooting at the Pope and the Bulgarians.

Up to this day all this has been veiled in the cloak of a campaign organized from the right and aimed at discrediting the USSR and Bulgaria.

Bonn, January 27, (BTA). The weekly 'Die Tat' of January 21 carried an extensive article in connection with the attempt on the life of the Pope.

After an introduction which reads as follows: 'In Italy the culprits for all hardships of the last ten years have been found', the writer stresses that despite the powerful campaign, the lies about the Bulgarian trail have burst like a balloon. To support this he quotes influential FRG newspapers.

Nevertheless Bulgaria is considered guilty by the FRG mass

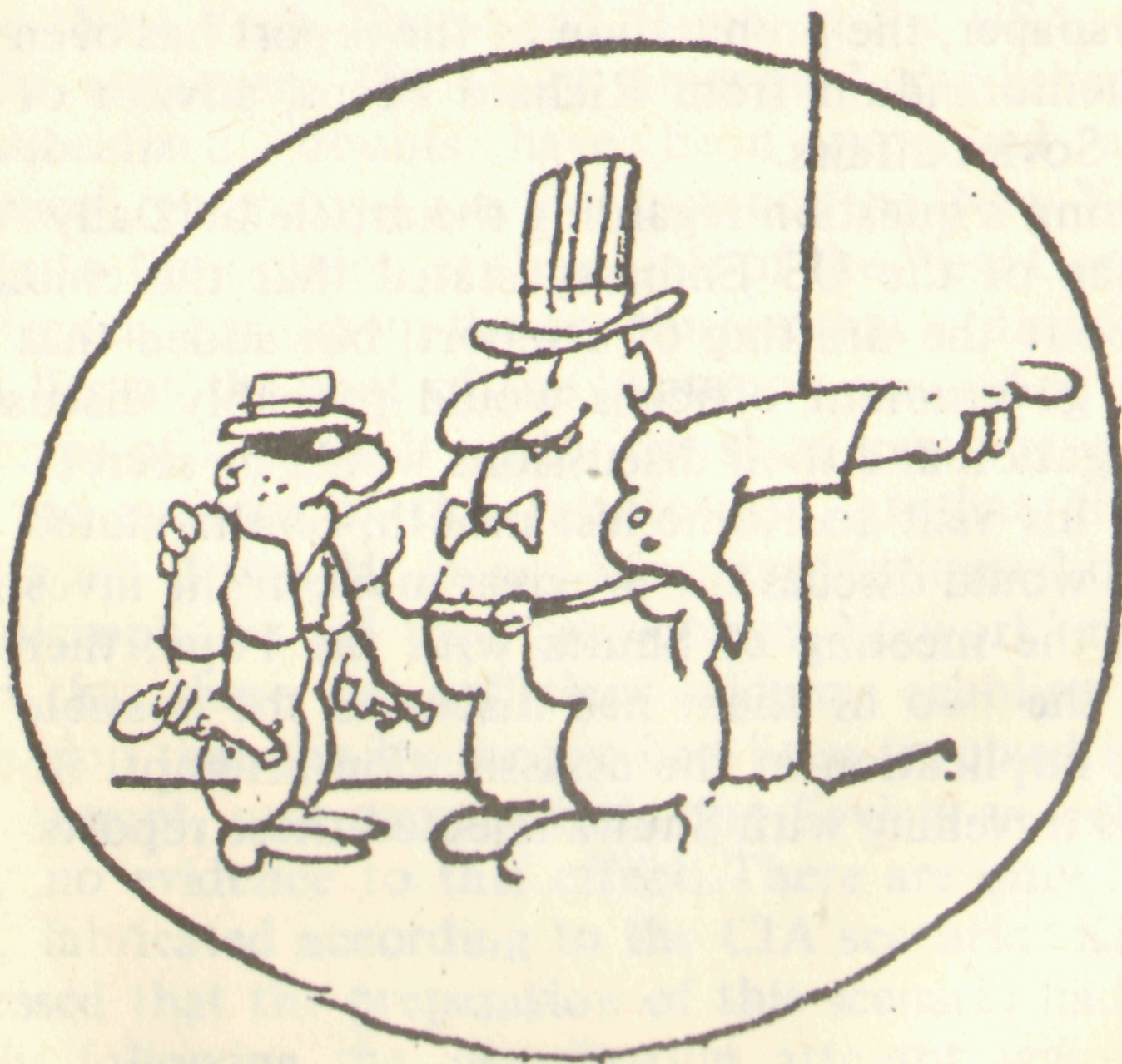
media which have as their motto the following statement: 'A lie should be repeated till it is accepted as a truth.'

According to the newspaper, the causes of the anti-Bulgarian campaign are rooted in the 'crusade against socialism' proclaimed by Reagan.

Rome, January 27 (BTA). In its issue of January 25, the Italian 'Giornale nuovo' writes that Antonov's alibi for May 12 has been supported by three Italian policemen who were on guard in front of the embassy that very day when he was on duty there.

Following this, Agca changed his evidence and admitted that he had made a mistake. In this connection the newspaper writes: 'The detail in question is an important one, and this is in full contradiction with the exceptional memory demonstrated by the Turkish terrorist who quotes from memory telephone numbers, dates and places of appointments with other persons involved in the plot, names of hotels and so on and so forth.'

Racho Rachev



You'll shoot from that corner, so that the report may resound from the East...

POLITICAL PRESSURE FROM OVERSEAS

A Report for Bush

Rome, January 11 (UPI). The Italian officials intend to present a report to US Vice-President George Bush on the progress made in the investigation of the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II, when Bush visits Rome next month, a US newspaper published in Rome reported today.

Quoting unnamed Italian and US diplomatic sources and a senior official in the Reagan Administration, the 'Daily American', published in English, reported that the paper was being prepared at the request of US Secretary of State George Shultz. Shultz met with the Pope in the Vatican last month.

The 'Daily American' points out that the report would be handed to Bush when he visits Rome on February 7. According to the newspaper, the preparation of the report has been accelerated by a memorandum from Richard Peeps, adviser of President Reagan on Soviet affairs.

Answering a question regarding the article in 'Daily American', a spokesman of the US Embassy stated that the embassy knew nothing about the drafting of a report, but added that Bush and the Italian government officials would probably discuss the current investigation and their discussions would be secret.

During his visit to Rome last month, Shultz stated that Italy and the US would discuss the progress made in the investigation.

During the meeting of Shultz with the Pope, there were reports that the two of them had discussed the possible Bulgarian and Soviet implication in the assassination attempt. But later the US officials travelling with Shultz rejected these reports.

The Grey Wolf, the Little Red Riding Hood and... the Ears of Henry Kissinger

Moscow, January 29, 1983 (BTA). In its latest issue the 'Literaturnaya Gazeta' newspaper carried L.Zamoyski's commentary headlined 'The Grey Wolf, the Little Red Riding Hood and ... the Ears of Henry Kissinger', which reads in part as follows:

It was until quite recently that the western press featured prominently 'the disclosures' of the Turkish terrorist Agca, his version that in the assassination attempt against the Pope of Rome he had been assisted by Sergei Antonov, the Bulgarian Balkan Airlines executive in Italy. Now it is only the die-hard propagators of anti-Sovietism that reiterate the version about the 'Bulgarians' and the 'hand of Moscow'. The provocation has come to a deadlock.

In numerous Italian publications as well as in such periodicals as the 'New York Times' and 'Time' in the USA, the French 'Le Monde' and even 'The Daily American', published in Rome and CIA-subsidized, doubts have been expressed as regards the 'evidence' given by Agca. For instance the 'New York Times', referring to the opinion of the chiefs of the West German and Israeli intelligence, has drawn the conclusion that a 'disinformation' campaign lies at the root of the 'Antonov case'. And just then when the heaps of filth built up by the slanderers began to crash down over the authors of this falsification, at that difficult moment they faced, it was Mr Henry Kissinger that raised his voice. Before the microphones of the 'Cable News Network' radio station he stated that there was sufficient evidence enabling us to draw the conclusion that the Bulgarians had been involved in the assassination attempt, and consequently the Soviets as well. There is certainly no evidence to this effect. There are only Agca's falsifications, fabricated according to the CIA scenario. Kissinger himself confessed that the preparation of this scenario had started immediately following the assassination attempt against the Pope. It turned out that a month and a half after the shots had been fired in St Peter's Square, he met Richard Helms, with whom he has

been maintaining a close friendship ever since the time when the latter was the chief of the CIA. According to the statements of the former US Secretary of State, in the course of their conversation, they had arrived at the conclusion that the assassination attempt resembled a KGB operation. It has become obvious that the subject discussed was what decision to take as regards the current anti-Bulgarian and anti-Soviet campaign. In this way Kissinger has been directly involved in plotting the provocation with the use of the Turkish fascist. It is possible that we might never learn more about the participation of the USSR in this operation, he added, but the USA should not be afraid to state what they think of the attempted assassination. According to Kissinger's logic, if facts of 'involvement' are not available they should be concocted. The USA should on all accounts wage an anti-Soviet campaign.

Tenyo Pindarev



Agca: — Effendi, if you just say so, I could put the blame on the Bulgarians for Abe Lincoln's murder in 1885, too.

A Telling Privilege

Sofia, February 7, 1983. (Krassimir Droumev, political observer of BTA.) A Republican senator from Italian stock named Alphonse D'Amato lives in the state of New York, and like some other American politicians, is in a hurry to enter the history of international relations as the pioneer of a new 'cold war' between the East and the West. No sooner had the Bulgarian citizen Sergei Antonov been arrested and the inquiry begun than the senator started granting interviews to magazines and television companies to the effect that he was absolutely convinced of the existence of a plot of 'the Bulgarian secret services' against the Pope. The senator was not put off by the fact that proof of any kind was wanting.

We would not have dwelled on the senator's comic efforts to draw public attention to himself, had not a rather puzzling fact surfaced during the past few days. Being dissatisfied with the scepticism of some Western intelligence services regarding the existence of a Bulgarian plot against the Pope, D'Amato boarded a plane to Rome. This is how he explained the purpose of his journey to ANSA: 'I want to gather as much information as possible about the assassination attempt and its possible international connections. We shall check data and reports', the senator went on and voiced his intentions to examine the testimony of the terrorist Agca and to meet the Italian examining magistrates.

In other words, D'Amato is about to do something which under Italian law is considered an offence, i.e. to violate the secret of the inquiry. Even the Bulgarian official representatives were not allowed to have a look at the documents of the inquiry although the charges are against a Bulgarian citizen. 'La Stampa' newspaper, which carried a headline 'A US senator is in Italy to "investigate" the Bulgarian connection', announced that he had already

met with the Minister of the Interior Rognoni. And this is a telling privilege indeed.

Before a representative of ANSA, D'Amato added that he would make the results of his investigations 'accessible to the Americans and to the citizens of the free world'. But his anti-communism suggests even now that 'the free world' could hardly depend on his information if instead of 'a Bulgarian' the senator happens to uncover ... a Western connection. In any case he will no doubt do his best to make the inquiry follow the direction desired by him.

Is this not the purpose of his interference in the work of the Roman magistracy?



The Senator Courts Popularity

The February 9 issue of the 'Rabotnichesko Delo' newspaper carried a commentary of its New York correspondent Georgi Todorchev in which it is written among other things:

Each drama has its comic character and the appearance on the Italian scene of Alphonso d'Amato in fact could be the subject of an ordinary feuilleton cue, had the role of the US senator not been so sinister ...

Today's 'The New York Times' published a photo of senator Alphonso d'Amato shaking hands with Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Emilio Colombo. Yesterday the US dabbler at politics met with the Italian Minister of the Interior Virginio Rognoni. He has had a talk with investigating magistrate Ilario Martella, with the Italian Minister of Justice, with high-ranking officials of the Italian police.

What is the reason for which d'Amato is so painstakingly going after the Italian officials, what is he considering with them, what is he so concerned about? Perhaps some problems related to the mafia, with which some newspapers linked his name during the 1980 pre-election campaign? Or may be problems with the trafficking of narcotic drugs into the USA — the country with the largest narcotic drug consumption, or with the 'import' of the so called 'gunmen' from Italy, who kill on the spot in the criminal world and then are taken back so that all tracks should be covered up.

No, d'Amato is not concerned with these things at all, he is by far not against arms which kill — one of his pre-election slogans was connected with 'the freedom of possessing firearms' and among the first to be appointed after he took office as a senator was the former leader of the US national association for carrying arms.

Alphonso Marcello d'Amato is interested in the 'Bulgarian' and the 'Soviet' connection, which some people are so eager to dig out

in the attempt on the life of the Pope. In fact he is not only interested, he also incites, provokes, 'goads' the investigation, wants details which are difficult to be pointed out anyway, insists upon drawing 'far-fetched' conclusions for political actions in East-West relations.

Reagan Butts in

New York, February 24 (BTA). At the conference for conservative political actions held at the end of last year in Washington, a speech was delivered by President Reagan. In it he voiced intransigence with regard to the socialist community countries, and promised that the superarmament of the US would continue. Dwelling on the question of the assassination attempt against the Pope, he said that the US would do everything within its power to disentangle the communist plot for the assassination of John Paul II. Referring to the need of directness and offensiveness in US foreign policy, the President immediately made an association with the tragic event which had shocked the world. He stated that the assassination attempt against His Holiness Pope John Paul II had been an act of malice and an encroachment against man and God that defy description, an act of international violence. It deserved the fullest possible investigation. He said he wanted to avail himself of the opportunity that evening of acclaiming the courage and determination displayed by the government of Italy in drawing the attention of the world to that question.

Rome, February 14 (BTA). 'Giornale d'Italia' newspaper of February 10 carried a report under the headline: 'Regan Is Furious: the CIA Is Not Investigating "the Red Track" '. It reads among other things: 'President Reagan is furious with the CIA because of the failure of the investigation of the assassination attempt against the Pope, and has ordered the chief of the secret service to go all the way along "the red track"'. The President became very angry while reading the reports from which it becomes obvious that the European sections of the CIA are not dealing with the case.'

New York, March 1 (BTA). Last night's issue of the 'New York Post' carries a short report stating that CIA agents would investigate the plot to assassinate the Pope. It reads that the CIA had been under a storm of criticism and had agreed to raise to a 'high' level the investigation of the Soviet and Bulgarian connection in the plot to kill Pope John Paul II.

It is reported that CIA director William Casey, who had been reprimanded by President Reagan that his department was only dawdling, and had further been accused by Senator Alphonse d'Amato of putting a lid on the investigation, had commissioned seven agents to aid the Italian authorities.

Casey had informed d'Amato about the new initiative during a top secret meeting in his office last week.

Earlier the two quarrelsome Long Islanders had exchanged a series of sharp remarks. But after leaving the meeting this time, d'Amato had expressed his 'satisfaction' that the CIA was already taking action.

However, the CIA, on whose behalf the conviction had once been expressed by private channels that the Turkish terrorist Agca had acted alone, would now have to go a long way to catch up with the Italians.

So That the Truth Might Remain Concealed

Sofia, February 21 (Krassimir Droumev, political analyst of the BTA). Washington is dissatisfied with the CIA. Facts are coming to light one after the other disproving the slander of a 'Bulgarian complicity' and at the same time directing the eyes of sober-minded people in the West to the special services and subversion centres of NATO, long notorious for their filthy operations. The danger is growing ever more apparent to Washington and to some of its allies, that the true organizers of both the assassination attempt against the Pope and the campaign against Bulgaria, the Soviet Union and the entire socialist community, would be exposed.

The risk of the mechanism of the provocation against Bulgaria being laid bare has obviously grown too big, since the US Senate Select Intelligence Committee has convened on a special session. Members of this committee, politicians having a long-standing 'reputation' of being anti-communists, expressed sharply their dissatisfaction with the fact that the CIA had not been making sufficient efforts to investigate the 'Bulgarian connection' in the assassination attempt against the Pope.

The statements of Secretary of State George Shultz to the so-called national conservative committee for political action, to the effect that the US government could have no 'fruitful relations' with Bulgaria as long as the latter harboured terrorism, can also be expected to inspire the anti-Bulgarian and anti-Soviet campaign with fresh impulses. Shultz did not make even a perfunctory attempt at backing his charges with evidence. He could not have acted differently, since it is undoubtedly well known to him that it is not Bulgaria that is behind the assassination attempt.

The words of the Secretary of State were received in the West as expressing the first official stand taken by the US on the plot against the Head of the Roman Catholic Church. The question is whether the chief of US diplomacy is aware of the respon-

sibility that his statement entails, for it is nothing else but a new edition of the slander against Bulgaria and a fresh attempt to interfere with the identification of the true organizers of the assassination attempt. In this case, too, the Washington Administration remains true to itself by worsening by all possible means the relations between East and West, and poisoning the international atmosphere in the name of its policy aimed at confrontation and military superiority.

Is It the Italian Court or the CIA That Is Conducting the Investigation?

Under this heading, 'Otechestven Front' newspaper of March 3, carried a commentary by Dimiter Shishmanov which reads in part:

'According to reports of the 'New York Post' of February 28, the CIA had been ordered to upgrade the investigation of the Soviet and Bulgarian connection in the plot to assassinate Pope John Paul II.

'CIA Director William Casey, who had been reprimanded by President Reagan that his agency had been dawdling, commissioned seven agents to assist the Italian judicial authorities.

'On February 18, the CIA informed the Senate Select Intelligence Committee about the course of the inquiry to prove "the Bulgarian trail" in the assassination attempt against the Pope. A meeting was also held attended by Robert Gates, chief of the Intelligence department of the CIA, and John Stein, head of the secret CIA operations. The CIA also relied on assistance from friendly intelligence services in Europe.

'Senator Barry Goldwater, Chairman of the Senate Select Intelligence Committee, as well as other members of the committee made public statements to the effect that the CIA could conduct the investigation alone, without the interference of the Italians. A bitter quarrel broke out between Barry Goldwater and another senator, Alphonse D'Amato who is directly involved in the investigation and shuttles between Washington and Rome to hand over his information directly to the central leadership of the CIA, on the question how the CIA should work in order to collect facts incriminating Bulgaria and the Soviet Union.

'One also reads in the US press that President Reagan personally expressed his view on the investigation. William Casey, CIA's chief, had met with the presidential adviser on security matters William Clark and had informed him about the course of the investigation into the assassination attempt against the Pope. William

Clark had stated for his part that the President had been preoccupied with the development of this case.

'The US mass media openly announce the instructions which are given to the CIA agents in Italy concerning their work on the investigation.

'Shall we recall the reports of the US mass media to the effect that the order for the arrest of the Bulgarian national Sergei Antonov had been issued after the return of the Italian investigating magistrate from Washington where he had met and held talks with the leaders of the CIA.

'Can there be a more overt and more flagrant interference of the CIA in the affairs of the Italian judicial authorities?

'Is there anyone who can fail to see that an inadmissible pressure is being exerted by the intelligence services of one country on the judicial authorities of another, in order to divert the legal investigation into the shooting of the Pope from discovering the truth, and instead, make it correspond to the political and strategic objectives and interests of the US.

'Who is conducting the legal investigation in Rome of the act of terrorism perpetrated on May 13, 1981 in St Peter's Square? Is it the Italian court or the CIA?'

A SUBVERSION OF THE NEO-CRUSADERS

Boyan Traikov before the Bulgarian Television

Sofia, February 22 (BTA). At 10 p.m. the Bulgarian Television showed an interview with BOYAN TRAIKOV, Director General of the Bulgarian News Agency (BTA). The interview, devoted to the inquiry into the attempt upon the life of Pope John Paul II produces fresh proofs that the accusations against Bulgaria are a total falsification, the perjury is permanently manipulated, and it is obvious that the inquiry is not after the truth but is serving the purpose of a political provocation.

The full text of the interview follows below:

— Comrade Traikov, would you kindly elaborate on how far the 'Antonov case' has got two months after your press conference?

— Most often the staged investigation of the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II is referred to as 'the Antonov case'. I denounce this kind of reference. We have to call things by their proper names, by names which reveal their genuine essence, and not by ones intended to produce premeditated suggestions. That is why I shall speak about the subversion against Bulgaria, the subversion against socialism and peace. This and only this is the truth about the inquiry currently in progress at the court of justice in Rome.

Since the press conference, the Italian press has published a great amount of 'leaked' information on the inquiry against Sergei Antonov. From this information, every unbiased person has got it clear that no fact, no evidence has ever confirmed Antonov's complicity in the assassination attempt. Such a fact cannot exist at all. The accusation levelled at Sergei Antonov is based on the false testimony of the assassin Agca alone. Many witnesses, honest and respectable citizens, confirmed Antonov's alibi for the days and hours of the preparations for and the actual perpetration of the assassination attempt. It became clear that during that time the Bulgarian national had been engaged in his routine work as an

employee of the Rome office of the Balkan Airlines. And yet the state's Assistant General Prosecutor Scorza and the investigating magistrate Martella turned down the petition of Antonov's counsel for the defence Consolo and Larussa to release the innocent Bulgarian. How are we to interpret this decision? By some kind of incompetence on the part of the Italian investigating authorities? It would be too naive! For us there is no other explanation but the one prompted by the facts which we stated already on Sergei Antonov's detention: this is a political provocation. A sort of a gas bomb meant to poison world public opinion with slanders and mistrust in Bulgaria. For us there is no other explanation but that in this case the Italian legal investigation authorities do not adhere to the obligatory objectivity but are acting in a biased manner serving the purposes of a political provocation and a campaign against Bulgaria and the entire socialist community.

— Could you please explain what are the charges against Antonov, and what are the grounds for them?

— The accusations levelled at Sergei Antonov have not been presented to us by the Italian authorities. We get the information about them from the Italian press.

Let us begin with the version proclaimed: the terrorist Agca, a member of the Turkish fascist nationalistic movement of Turkes, has been connected with the Bulgarian secret services through the Turkish national Bekir Celenk. At the price of three million Deutsche marks they are reported to have hired him and his fascist organization the 'Grey Wolves' to murder the Pope.

In their history the Bulgarian people, the Bulgarian Communist Party, have written many a bright and heroic page in the struggle against fascism. Bulgaria is the land of the first anti-fascist uprising in the world, the homeland of Georgi Dimitrov, the titan of the international anti-fascist resistance. The socialist social system in Bulgaria was born in the victorious struggle against fascism. The essence of this system is profoundly anti-fascist, and its attitude towards 'classical' and 'modern' fascism can be no other than condemnation and struggle.

How is it possible at all that someone may imagine and speak of any connection between us and fascists. This is a sacrilege.

If we assume that Agca is not a lone fanaticized murderer, and has acted with the help of his fascist organization the 'Grey Wolves', then what should be looked for is their natural connection

with those reactionary centres which, with their money, guns and advice, support the extremist terrorist groups and organizations in Western Europe. That is the right place to look for, because these connections are known and proved.

Very often the following question is asked: how is it possible for the assassin Agca, wanted by Interpol, to have lived at ease in Sofia's best hotels, unnoticed by the perfect Bulgarian militia? An examination of the frontier checkpoint forms has shown that a person of this name has neither entered nor left Bulgaria. They say he was in Bulgaria with a forged Indian passport under the name of Yoginder Singh. But the check-up shows that in 1980 Bulgaria was crossed by not one but 18 Indian nationals of the same name of Yoginder Singh. Which one of them was Agca and was there an Agca among them at all?

On December 17, I asked the absolutely logical question: well, how did it happen that the police services of several West European states, all of them Interpol members, warned about the terrorist, failed to notice and detain Agca who had been moving for months on end in hotels and restaurants in Switzerland and Austria, in the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy, and so on and so forth. So far this question has remained unanswered.

A classical rule says: 'When the trails of a crime are too obvious, then there is something suspicious about it'. What then? Had the Bulgarian authorities been in a criminal contact with Agca, would they have shown him off in most distinguished hotels frequented by many foreigners such as Vitosha, Sofia etc? Where is the logic? And if the Italian investigating magistrates pay no heed to logic, this does not mean that there is no logic at all, and that it does not confute both Agca and them.

Judging by the publications in the Italian press, the accusations against Sergei Antonov are hinged on clues produced by Agca alone. What are these clues and what is their correspondence with reality?

— Agca is said to have maintained that during the time of the assassination attempt, he had been in St Peter's Square together with Antonov. The Bulgarian's task was to shoot, to create confusion and take Agca away to a safe place.

— Antonov neither fired nor had any gun about him, and during the time of the assassination attempt he had not been in St Peter's Square. Many witnesses testify that Antonov was then in the Rome Balkan Airlines office.

— Agca revised his testimony and began alleging that he had been with Antonov till 4.00 p.m., implying that it was possible for Antonov to have left the square afterwards, abandoning the arrangement he had with Agca to take him away, and returning to his Balkan Airlines office instead.

— If so, after hearing over the radio that Agca has been seized, would it not occur to Antonov that he would be betrayed by the Turk for having failed to rescue him? Would Antonov not board the first plane and flee from Italy? And here is yet another logical question which has so far remained open — what kind of an assailant would have remained in the respective country for a year and a half following the event, moreover after 'Bulgarian trail' rumours had already appeared?

— Agca gave some phone numbers of Antonov, Aivazov and others. A note with these phone numbers was also found in his pocket on his detention. He alleged he had called them by assumed names.

— Antonov and Aivazov had no phones. And the other phone numbers were of the Bulgarian embassy and of the Balkan Airlines office. Is there any plotter in his right mind who would organize such an important assassination by making connections on the embassy phones which, it is natural to assume, can be tapped. Who would allow the assailant to carry the phone numbers about him during the assassination? In what way did Agca get in touch with Antonov and the other accomplices having known not their proper but only their assumed names? Could it well be that the lady telephone operators of the embassy were also implicated in the 'plot'?

— Agca alleged to have met Antonov and Aivazov in their homes and described the interior of these apartments.

— Not only no one would conspire in his own apartment, especially in a building of the Bulgarian embassy, where Aivazov lived, and which is most probably watched, but also the description of the apartment interiors produced by Agca, irrespective of what he had been told and the pictures he had been shown, only partially corresponded to reality. Agca for instance mentioned a certain wooden folding-door in Antonov's apartment. There is no such folding-door in Antonov's apartment. There is such a door in the apartment above Antonov's, an apartment which was empty,

for sale, and therefore visited by many people.

— Agca alleged he held his conversations with Antonov in the English language, and he spoke English and German to his wife Rossitsa Antonova.

— Sergei Antonov does not know or speak any English. Rossitsa Antonova does not know or speak any English and German. What then?

— They say in Rome that regardless of some 'slips' in Agca's testimony concerning Antonov, he could still be trusted because of his faithfulness in earlier revelations.

— Former trustworthiness is not and cannot be a criterion for present reliability. And if we speak of Agca's former trustworthiness, was he trustworthy during the trial regarding the assassination attempt against the Pope, when he asserted he had acted single-handed.

We can give many more examples of ungrounded and untenable assertions, of discrepant arguments from the inquiry against Sergei Antonov. Many Italian and other foreign colleagues, as well as Bulgarian journalists, were left with the same impression, and they did write about a number of untrue or illogical facts, situations and conclusions deriving from Agca's testimony against Sergei Antonov. But even these few examples we are quoting show unambiguously that the accusation against Antonov is based on Agca's testimony which is false throughout, and that Agca could not have been able to invent and prepare this false testimony had he not been supplied with lies, taught and constantly instructed by someone.

— Could you kindly substantiate this conclusion of yours, namely that someone is manipulating Agca?

— In the course of the inquiry, Agca kept on making changes in his testimony aimed at overwhelming Antonov's alibi as presented by his defence counsels Consolo and Larussa, an alibi already proved by facts and witnesses' accounts.

Antonov had a confirmed alibi for the time between 5.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m., the hour of the attempted assassination on May 13, 1981. He had been in the Balkan Airlines office, therefore he could not have been in St Peter's Square at the same time to fire a pistol and throw a grenade, to take Agca away and rescue him, as the murderer kept alleging.

In spite of the obligatory secrecy of the inquiry, in spite of the complete isolation of Agca, now note this circumstance please, he has learned about this alibi of Antonov and hastened to revise his initial testimony by saying: now I already state that I was with Antonov near the square until 4.00 p.m. In other words, by shifting the hours he wants to invalidate Antonov's alibi which has already been confirmed.

Antonov had also an ironclad alibi for May 12, the day on which, according to the testimony of Agca, he in the company of Antonov and Aivazov, rehearsed the assassination in St Peter's Square. Antonov though, could not have been at any 'rehearsal' at that time, because he was at the Bulgarian embassy and was seen there by many people.

In spite of the obligatory secrecy of the inquiry, in spite of his isolation, Agca has learned again about this alibi of Antonov, and has demanded a meeting with the investigators at which he stated: I refreshed my memory and I remember now that Antonov was not in the square on May 12.

How has Agca learned exactly when and what to correct, and what a new lie to invent? Is it not clear that in the course of the inquiry his lies have been constantly steered by the same mysterious characters and services who, as has already become known, have illegally visited him in prison during his state of strict solitary confinement.

To explain these apparently manipulated changes in the testimony, or rather in Agca's lies, the Italian investigating authorities offer an interpretation which is not serious, to say the least. These are regarded as a mere expression of Agca's spontaneity and sincerity.

Whereas we state what is evident, namely that the Italian investigating authorities have been collaborating with the respective secret services in order to concoct the charges against Antonov, thus providing legal grounds for the political provocation levelled at Bulgaria.

— Since Agca is revising his testimony in order to 'disprove' Antonov's alibi, and since he has the support of the investigating authorities, in what way then can Antonov's innocence be proved?

— Lies have short legs as the folk saying goes. The liar and his lie-guides have walked straight into the trap quite by themselves, in the following way:

Some witnesses have said that to the best of their knowledge round the date of May 13, 1981, i.e. the days preceding and during the assassination attempt, the wife of Antonov — Rossitsa Antonova — was in Rome. The 'directors' of Agca immediately decided to use this circumstance to further reinforce his charges against Antonov with new stronger 'clues' and 'evidence'. And Agca, who is otherwise a criminal of perfect memory, citing a lot of telephone numbers, describing apartments and depicting a heap of other circumstances and details, suddenly comes to recall an event — the biggest and the most important in the whole process of preparation of the assassination. All of a sudden he remembered that on May 10, a most important meeting was held in Antonov's home, which was attended by Agca himself, Antonov, Aivazov, Vassilev and four more Turks. He claims that Rossitsa Antonova and a small girl of about ten, presumably the daughter of the Antonov family, the then ten-year-old Annie, were also present at the meeting.

Note, this is very important! With his well-nigh phenomenal memory, producing a host of handy details, in his testimony Agca omitted not just a minor detail, but a major meeting, at which, as the newspaper 'Il Giornale' says, the date and the way of carrying out the assassination were fixed, and which was attended by ten people. Apparently this was a crucial meeting.

Because of the one year and a half following the event, memory has failed some of the witnesses.

I have at my disposal information on the grounds of which I can state: on May 10, 1981, Sunday, Rossitsa Antonova and Annie Antonova were not in Rome, and therefore could not have attended any meeting as set forth by the assassin Agca. Rossitsa Antonova left Rome on May 8 by car, she drove across Italy and Yugoslavia, and on May 10, the day on which she was supposed, in Agca's words to have attended a meeting on the papal assassination in Rome, Rossitsa Antonova was in Sofia.

Annie, the daughter of the Antonovs, attended the Sofia Kliment of Ohrid school throughout the year, and on May 10, the day on which Agca claims she had been in the Rome apartment of the Antonovs, she, too, was not in Italy, but in Sofia.

This fact is of enormous significance. 'How come the Turk mentions dates?' asks 'Il Messagero' while citing investigating magistrate Ilario Martella. 'And what if Rossitsa Antonova was not in

Italy and in Rome in January? What if on May 10, Sunday, Antonov was not at home? What if his wife was away and the apartment locked? ... Then what was the accusing Turk to do? He would have been loudly refuted'.

This is what is actually happening. The very fact that on the day in question, May 10, 1981, Rossitsa and Annie Antonova were not in Rome, but in Sofia, and the fact that in January of 1981 Rossitsa Antonova was in Sofia again and not in Rome being introduced to Agca, as the terrorist maintains, come as two more essential proofs loudly disproving the lies of Agca and refuting all those who pass the lies to him. In addition to many other facts, these, too, reveal the manipulated character and essence of the investigation against Antonov.

— These proofs are indeed very substantial and crush the testimony of Agca. But is there not a danger that he might try 'to concentrate' again and say that the actual day of the meeting was May 7, having in mind that Rossitsa Antonova set out on May 8, 1981, and that he met her not in January but in some other month of the year?

— That is precisely why we are presenting these facts, to the entire Bulgarian and world public not only to Antonov's defence counsels so that in case Agca happens to alter his evidence again, everybody can see and understand, and become convinced, if they have failed to do so up to now, that Agca keeps on lying, and what is more, does so with the help of the secret services and the collaboration of the Italian investigating authorities.

I would like to draw your attention to three astonishing stands in the conduct of this Italian inquiry.

How is it possible to have greater trust in the evidence of a habitual criminal sentenced to death for murder, and to life imprisonment for an assassination attempt against the head of the Roman Catholic Church, and to distrust totally the words of a man who has never been convicted before, a man with untainted reputation, an honest man, such as Antonov. This is contrary to both classical and modern juridical rules. Why then the Italian courts insist on knowing in advance whether a witness has been previously convicted or not, when they consider the matter of no importance at all?

How is it possible that the Italian inquiry should have no trust in the Bulgarian witnesses only because of their communist ideolo-

gy? Do they not consider all people equal before the law? And once they distinguish between people because of their ideological affiliations, why should the investigating authorities then have preferences for the testimony of Agca and his criminal neo-fascist ideology?

And yet another thing. A lot of discrepant and dubious points have appeared in the accusations against Antonov. Quite unexpectedly though, instead of the classical maxim of 'every doubt is in favour of the accused', in this particular case we see the working of quite a new maxim, namely that 'every doubt is in favour of the accuser'. We see the foundations of Roman Law crumble down and precedents being set of a 'new' Roman law.

— And now, Comrade Traikov, would you like to wind up by making a final comment.

— I would like to stress again: there is no person or organization in Bulgaria that have assigned or could have assigned Sergei Antonov, Todor Aivazov, Zhelyo Vassilev or anybody else to assassinate Pope John Paul II. The Bulgarian 'complicity' in the papal assassination attempt is a falsification. It is a conspiracy and a provocation meant to spark off the subsequent slander campaign against Bulgaria and against socialism in general.

The Marxist-Leninist ideology and the socialist essence of Bulgaria rule out terrorist acts, connections or complicity with terrorists and their organizations. We condemn in no uncertain terms terrorist tactics and acts, and we are energetically combating international terrorism.

The prosecution initiated against Antonov has no legal grounds, it is not an error of the inquiry and still less — a routine verification of evidence. By resorting to the ready services of a slayer, a plot is being carried through in Rome's court of justice, whose political objective is to discredit Bulgaria and socialism, to sow mistrust and hatred between the states and the peoples of the two social systems.

This is the ultimate aim of the crusade against socialism, announced by the President of the United States. But while the mediaeval crusades were crimes and conquests against the eastern peoples, this crusade in the nuclear world of today is not and cannot be oriented to the East alone. It is a crime against all peoples, against their understanding and cooperation, it paves the way to an assault on peace, on civilization and the life of humanity.

Historical experience has taught us that political provocations and slander campaigns have never been an end in themselves. The fire in the Reichstag was meant to illumine the rise of fascism. The Rome provocation must justify the strivings of the US and NATO militarism towards world supremacy and domination.

We address all people: there is no such thing as an 'Antonov case' in Rome. There is only a plot against us Bulgarians and against all of you, against our common peace, against our common future which can be built only upon the foundations of understanding between the East and the West. There is no 'Antonov case'. There is only an act of subversion of the neo-crusaders.

Commentary on a Communique

Sofia, February 25 (BTA). Today the Italian press published a communique of the investigating authorities in Rome about the interview given by Boyan Traikov, General Director of the BTA.

The investigating authorities feel obliged to explain, the communique reads, that the investigation which involves Antonov and other persons in connection with the attempt on Pope John Paul II's life, is conducted with strict adherence to the existing laws. The claim on the part of Bulgaria that there was a plot designed to unleash a slander campaign against Bulgaria and against socialism in general is unjustified, it is stressed in the communique which again points out that the judicial authorities in the Italian state are independent, something guaranteed by the Constitution.

In conclusion, the communique notes that there had been references during the interview to proofs in possession of the Bulgarian authorities of the innocence of Antonov. In view of the apparent need for cooperation, the investigating authorities express the wish for these proofs to be immediately submitted to the investigating magistrate in Rome, so that he may be able to decide on what they are grounded and of what value they could be for the purposes of justice, all the more so as they claim to prove Antonov to have nothing to do with the charges made against him.

Invited to comment on the communique issued by the investigating authorities in Rome, the General Director of the BTA, Boyan Traikov stated:

'For three months now we have calmly and confidently been looking forward to the results of the investigation involving Sergei Antonov. But the course of the investigation has shown the strange attitude to the real proofs and evidence provided by witnesses in favour of Antonov. It was also a strange reply that came from the investigating authorities in connection with my interview over the Bulgarian Television — a reply that evades fundamental, key questions. In the interview I specifically asked:

‘Why does the investigation trust the evidence given by a condemned criminal-assassin, and mistrusts the words of the respectable citizen Antonov who has a clean record?’

‘Why is mistrust shown to the evidence of witnesses — Bulgarians and Italian communists, on the grounds of their political and ideological views — are not all equal before the law? And why is the evidence of a criminal with neo-fascist political and ideological affiliation accepted as more trustworthy?’

‘How could Agca, despite the obligatory secrecy of the investigation and his complete isolation (for which the investigating authorities are liable) learn about crucial arguments of Antonov’s alibi, and subsequently correct his initial evidence in a way that makes this alibi invalid, or, as I put it in the interview “How could Agca know exactly when and what he should correct and what new lies he should offer?”’

‘Do the Italian investigating authorities not see the multitude of discrepancies and contradictions between the evidence given by Agca and the real state of affairs about which I have given more than one example?’

‘Why are the numerous doubts aroused unquestionably by Agca’s contradictory evidence treated as “an expression of spontaneity and frankness”, i.e. in his favour, and not as proclaimed by old Roman law, where any doubt is in favour of the accused, i.e. of Antonov?’

‘The investigating magistrates in Rome evade these and other questions we ask, and give no answers to them.’

‘The concluding words of the communique issued by the investigating authorities in Rome are most surprising. In the interview I did not speak of proofs which we are to submit; unequivocally, I pointed out facts which disprove the accusatory evidence of Agca, and consequently show the innocence of Antonov.’

‘How can this request for proof on questions which can easily be proved by the Italian investigating magistrates be explained? Could the magistrates in Rome not approach the Italian frontier authorities and obtain data to the effect that Rossitsa Antonova had left Italy on May 8, 1981. The appropriate Italian authorities should have in their possession records which can show also that Rossitsa Antonova had not been in Italy in January, 1981, and therefore could not possibly have been able to meet Agca at the Piccadilly restaurant and food store in Barberini street in

Rome. If the investigation is really concerned with the truth let it verify these facts in the records kept on Italian territory, and not request them from Sofia.

'The communique notes "the obvious need of cooperation". We are not only willing to cooperate, but have in the first place proposed it in an official letter from the Bulgarian to the Italian Ministry of Justice. We proposed cooperation on a reciprocal basis. The question naturally arises: what have the Italian examining magistrates presented to us so far for them to have the moral and the legal ground to request from us proofs that would refute these charges? Is it not guilt that must be proven, and not innocence?! Once again the investigation ignores the fundamental classical principle that it is the accusation that must be proven!

'If some think that they can treat us unjustifiably in such an unprecedented way, trying to pass us off as the culprits who must exculpate themselves, they are seriously deceiving themselves.

'Bulgaria has no connection whatsoever with the assassination attempt against the head of the Roman Catholic Church. We refute in an argumented way this slander levelled at us and shall further expose its nature of a political subversion.'

I Am Worried about Sergei Antonov

Sofia, February 28 (BTA). Today a BTA correspondent interviewed Mr Dimiter Dimitrov, Director General of the Balkan Bulgarian Airlines.

—It is now more than two months since the Balkan Airlines employee Sergei Antonov has been detained in an Italian prison, ungroundedly accused of complicity in the assassination attempt against the Pope. We understand you had been in Rome and met Antonov?

—I visited Antonov in the Rebibbia prison in Rome. I told him that everything possible was being done for his release and I expressed the conviction of everyone in Bulgaria that truth will prevail.

I informed him that Balkan completed the year successfully and many employees, including Sergei Antonov, were awarded medals and given object awards for their good work. He rejoiced at his awards, a medal and a watch which I showed him.

I told Antonov that I was carrying a letter from his wife Rositsa and that steps were being taken for his daughter Annie to visit him. This gave him assurance and fresh strength.

—How is Antonov feeling?

—Sergei is in rather poor health. For some time he has been having headaches and he told me his memory failed him of late. He said he was often 'haunted by thoughts which were not his own' and he was trying to chase them away.

Although he says he has a fairly good appetite, Sergei has lost much weight. His face is pale and sallow.

—Do you think that the conditions in Italy's 'most luxurious' prison are the cause of the deterioration of Sergei Antonov's health?

—The conditions in the Rebibbia prison are the same as in any other prison, but I don't think they are the only cause.

—What then?

-I am not a doctor, I do not have any medical knowledge to be able to comment on these symptoms and pronounce a diagnosis. But I am greatly worried about Sergei Antonov, especially having in mind some cases I have read about in the press, cases of 'sudden nervous disorders' of persons under investigation or such condemned in the Italian prisons.

NEW ACCUSATIONS

Yet Another Spectre

New York, January 26 (AP). — In a documentary, broadcast last night by the American television company NBC, Mehmet Ali Agca, who was sentenced for an attempt to assassinate Pope John Paul II, was said to have taken part in the deliberation of the plan to kill the Polish trade union leader Lech Walesa.

The film was an updated variant of the film about the man who shot at the Pope, an investigation of terrorism, which was broadcast last September and advanced the theory that Bulgaria had been making preparations for the Pope's assassination with the Soviet Union's tacit approval.

Marvin Calb, the chief diplomatic correspondent of the NBC was the speaker in both films. The new material from the film screened yesterday was also broadcast in the company's bulletin of news.

Among the new facts that Calb put forward was that during Walesa's visit to Rome in 1981, Agca had met the Bulgarian Sergei Ivanov Antonov. Calb stated that Agca had said they had deliberated on a plan of Walesa's assassination. But for some reason no attempt to carry it out had been made.

Paris, March 1 (BTA). — Under the headline 'The Bulgarians Want to Kill Walesa too' given front-page prominence, the 'Matin' newspaper, which is the daily with the third largest circulation in Paris and close to the ruling socialist party, gave a full page to an article by its contributor in Rome, Guillaumet de Vericourt.

After quoting from reports of the news agencies about 'preparations for an attempt to be made on the life of Lech Walesa', the writer adds: 'It has long been known that the Turkish terrorist Ali Agca who fired at the Pope has in the course of the investigation also talked of a plan for an attempt on the life of the Polish trade union activist. It is strange, therefore, why the Roman judges had to wait so long before starting the investigation. The

magistrates declined to specify in any way why they had proceeded that way, while judge Ilario Martella is most discreet. It can be seen, however, that this judicial announcement comes at a telling moment. On the one hand, it is the result of the rather grave accusations against the Roman judges made several days ago over the Bulgarian Television by the spokesman of the Bulgarian Government Boyan Traikov in connection with Antonov's detention in prison. Criticizing the "strange way" in which in his view the investigation was conducted in Rome, he pointed to the serious inaccuracies in the evidence given by Agca in connection with the preparations for the attempt.

Rome, March 1 (Correspondent of the BTA). — The 'Antonov case' is again given front-page coverage by the Italian press today. The commentaries on the summons served in prison on Sergei Antonov whereby the investigating magistrate Ferdinando Imposimato formulates the charge of 'mass murder and an attempt planned on the life of Lech Walesa' appeared as a curtain-raiser of the second act in the anti-Bulgarian campaign.

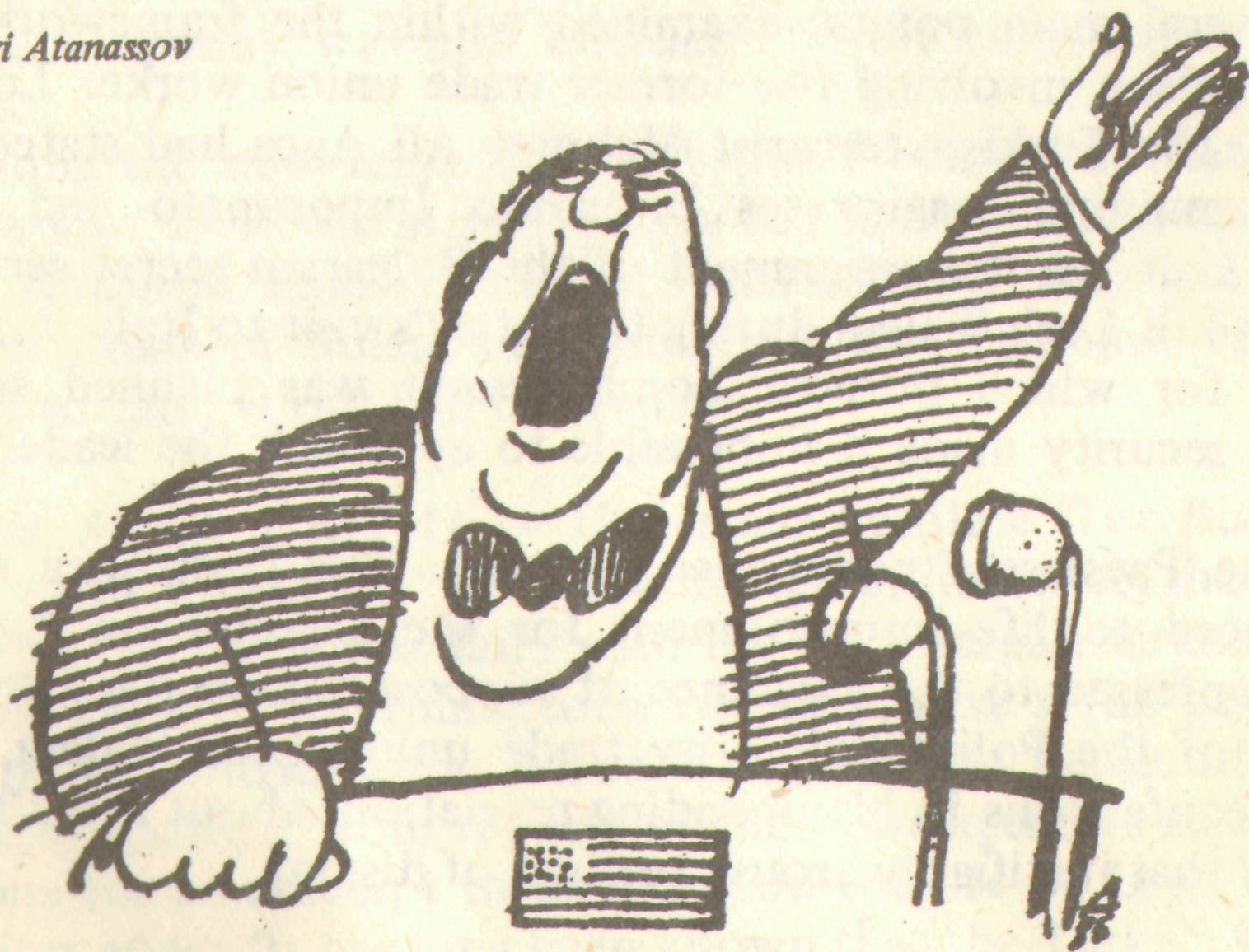
The commentaries are based on 'leaked information' containing several main points: examined within the framework of the investigation involving the former trade union worker Luigi Scricciolo, the Turkish terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca had stated before the examining magistrates Fernando Imposimato and Rosario Priore that 'on the assignment of the Bulgarian secret services' he was to kill Lech Walesa during the latter's visit to Italy in January, 1981, for which purpose bomb assault was planned since the strong security made it impossible to approach the leader of Solidarity.

The 'Paese sera' newspaper reported: 'The Turk Agca, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for the attempt on the Pope's life, confessed to the existence of supposed conspiracy to kill the leader of the Polish Solidarity trade union Lech Walesa, making these confessions in his unending revelations about the "Bulgarian affair" that justifiably arouse feelings of dismay.'

Rome, March 2 (Correspondent of the BTA). — Tonight the ANSA Agency reported: 'After Luigi Scricciolo, another trade union functionary of the UTL (Italian Union of Labour — corr.

note) runs the risk of being involved in the inquiry about the Bulgarian trail. That is Salvatore Scordo who has been served one of the seven summons that formulate the hypothesis of a mass murder through a supposed attempt on the life of Lech Walesa.'

Georgi Atanassov



No communist could go to Rome and not try to assassinate the Pope or at least Lech Walesa!

Again on a False Trail

Rome, February 28 (Reuter). — The official of the Bulgarian Airlines and the Turk who shot at the Pope two years back, have today been warned officially that they could be charged with conspiracy to kill the Polish trade union leader Lech Walesa, the Ministry of Justice announced today.

Asked to comment on the notice served to Antonov, one of his counsels for the defence Guiseppe Consolo, said: 'I am astounded, but after all that has happened, I cannot be surprised as all seems to grow more and more ludicrous.'

He added: 'I am convinced that my client is innocent.'

Rome, March 1 (UPI). — The Bulgarian Embassy today denounced as propaganda the allegations that Sergei Antonov had any part in a conspiracy to kill the Polish Solidarity trade union leader Lech Walesa, or in the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II.

In today's declaration of the Bulgarian Embassy, published in the afternoon, the decision of judge Imposimato is qualified as an 'absurd accusation', and Antonov himself as an 'innocent victim of a new attempt at undermining the good relations traditionally existing between the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Italy.'

'After the accusations against Antonov for an alleged implication in the attempt on Pope John Paul II's life have practically fallen apart, one cannot help being stirred by the fact that a new round of the slander campaign of provocation is beginning,' the declaration of the embassy reads.

'The Embassy of the People's Republic of Bulgaria categorically states that Sergei Antonov has nothing whatsoever to do with the accusations made against him,' the declaration notes. 'He must immediately be released from prison in the name of justice.'

A BTA Announcement

A political provocation, one of the most malicious provocations in the history of Europe, is being given a disgraceful new development. Since the arrest in Rome of the Bulgarian citizen Sergei Antonov more than three months ago, the absurdity of the accusation against him of complicity in the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II, has become quite obvious. But instead of ending their anti-Bulgarian and anti-socialist campaign, its authors and instigators are now trying to inject new life into it. According to news agency reports, Sergei Antonov has been officially informed of the opening of a new investigation against him, of his alleged involvement in a plot to kill the leader of the former trade union 'Solidarity', Lech Walesa, during the latter's visit to Rome. The 'disclosures' were once again made by the notorious Mehmet Ali Agca, the Turkish terrorist who made an attempt on the Pope's life and on whose fully concocted 'confessions', orchestrated from outside, is based the accusation against Sergei Antonov of involvement in the plot against the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

The investigating authorities in Italy are obviously intent on continuing to keep the Bulgarian citizen behind bars at all costs and on continuing the campaign against Bulgaria and other socialist countries. Having reached an impasse in proving the truth of a 'Bulgarian involvement' in the assassination attempt against the Pope, they are now doing their best to push that accusation into the background, to bury it into oblivion and to focus attention on new phantasmagoric accusations. The falsifiers and slanderers are aiming to achieve a new propaganda effect, that is to make the slanders against Bulgaria once again front-page news in the bourgeois press. They want to resume the anti-socialist campaign, planned as a long-term project.

We would hardly go wrong if we say that other provocative operations against the socialist countries are currently on the

stocks at NATO's subversive agencies, operations in the spirit of the 'crusade' declared against those countries.

The world, however, possesses a wealth of historical experience. The democratic public will not be easily taken in. It severely condemns those who are making great efforts to poison international relations and to sow distrust and hatred among the peoples. Like the nazi Reichstag Fire provocation of 1933, the present provocation, too, is having a boomerang effect on its instigators and perpetrators.

Sofia, March 2, 1983

Rome Gets into a Panic

Vienna, March 4 (BTA). — In its issue of March 2, 1983 the 'Volksstimme' newspaper carried an article under the headline 'Rome Gets into a Panic. Why Not Walesa, if Not the Pope', and the subheading 'Absurd manoeuvres against the detained Bulgarian'.

The numerous 'clues' against Antonov, which the Italian secret services have tried to level at him so far through the evidence given by Ali Agca intended to 'testify' to the Bulgarian's complicity in the attempt on the Pope's life, have meanwhile proved to be sheer lies. In spite of the fact that Antonov has presented a firm alibi for the time of the perpetration of the attempt, he has not yet been released.

It is all the more disgraceful, the article reads further, that the Italian authorities now try to ascribe to Antonov a part in a conspiracy to kill Walesa, too.

Rome, March 6 (PAP). — Clearly because of the ever more apparent failure of any attempts at linking Antonov with the assassination attempt against the Pope of Rome, the organizers of the anti-Bulgarian campaign have deemed it necessary to enliven it by new elements. So of late they have decided to make it known that Antonov had been implicated 'in the organizing of an assassination attempt on the former Solidarity chairman Lech Walesa' during his stay in Rome in January, 1981.

We can bet that this pseudo-sensation, unsupported by any evidence, the PAP observer writes, will be deadlocked in the same way as the charges raised against Antonov. It is characteristic that even the West European press, avid for sensations, received the new version sceptically, and even Radio Free Europe expressed doubts on March 2 of any preparations having been made for an attempt on Lech Walesa's life. It is also characteristic that the megaphones of western propaganda referring to biased public

opinion would rather speak of 'assumptions' and 'rumours' as regards the new charges against Antonov, but they still trumpet about them all the time. The aim pursued by them is not to seek the truth, but to make anti-socialist propaganda.

Rome, March 8 (Correspondent of the BTA). — 'Paese sera' newspaper today carried an extensive report under the headline 'Scricciolo Maintained Contacts with American Diplomats'.

This comes in confirmation in Italy of the disclosures made in the 'Trybuna Ludu' newspaper which late last year carried material exposing the activities in service of the CIA of the former trade union functionary of the Italian Union of Labour (UTL) Luigi Scricciolo.

'Meanwhile, according to unofficial data the investigating magistrates are trying to solve yet another puzzle. It concerns a series of visits paid by Luigi Scricciolo to the US Embassy from time to time. That was in 1981, the year of the attempt on the Pope's life (May 13) and of Lech Walesa's visit to Rome (January). At the time Scricciolo was also a trade union worker in charge of the international relations department of the UTL. During that period, according to unofficial reports, he fell into the odd habit of visiting what seems every week and with stop-watch punctuality the US Embassy in Veneto Street where he had conversations with some officials (always the same ones) protected by diplomatic immunity.

'Scricciolo had stated that those meetings were a part of the UTL's normal activities. However, this has not dispelled the doubts of the investigating magistrates, as it seems that nobody in the UTL had any knowledge of these weekly contacts with the embassy of Washington,' 'Paese sera' points out.

The same facts were reported by the 'Espresso' magazine in its latest issue.

A MEETING OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF BTA WITH BULGARIAN AND FOREIGN JOURNALISTS

MARCH 4, 1983

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Good afternoon to all of you!

Colleagues, some of you expressed the desire to have a meeting with me and to ask me questions. Those who expressed such a wish were quite a few and for this reason I proposed that we should have this general meeting. The subject is well-known. Some people refer to it as the 'Antonov case', but I call it a subversion mounted by the neo-crusaders.

I would like to express my wish that we have a businesslike, pleasant and above all useful meeting.

I am not going to make an expose because our position, the position of our country, on the development of the investigation in Rome — I have in mind the latest developments, was presented in my interview broadcast on the Bulgarian television, in my commentary on the communique of the Rome Department of Inquiry and in an announcement of the BTA published yesterday, i.e. the position of our country has been expressed, it is known to all of you.

I would like to inform you that all these materials have been translated into several languages and are at your disposal. They are available on a desk in the foyer in front of the hall, and everybody wishing to familiarize himself with them can have a copy.

Gentlemen, I am at your disposal.

Please. Comrade Mateev, I know him, he is from the 'Rabotnichesko Delo' newspaper.

Y o a n M a t e e v: Thank you. Comrade Traikov, a new trend has recently been manifested in the anti-Bulgarian campaign in the West. Now it seems that there is less emphasis on the accusations of a Bulgarian involvement in the assassination attempt against the Head of the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, however, new charges have been brought against Antonov of an alleged participation in a plot for the assassination of other persons, again in complicity with the notorious Agca. I would

like to ask you to throw some light on the purpose of these new accusations and the new stage in this campaign — can we consider it to be the last one.

Besides I would like to ask another question if you will allow me. It has been reported that Antonov's chief met him in Rome. We have been alarmed by what we heard from him — that the state of Antonov's health has deteriorated. What would your comment be on this?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Colleagues, we have expressed our attitude to this new accusation, to the beginning of a new investigation against Antonov, in an announcement of the BTA. I will again present our thesis. Here it is:

In our view, seeing that the so-called 'Bulgarian trail' as regards the complicity in the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II could not be sustained, and this was only too natural because it was an ungrounded accusation, the Rome Department of Inquiry has tried to find a way out of the situation in another direction.

Over the last two or three months it has become clear that the accusation, based only upon the false testimony of Agca, has collapsed, it has failed. That is why I want to express our gratitude to some Italian colleagues who rendered assistance by revealing some interesting facts. This accusation collapsed, quite obviously it could not be sustained. And now a new accusation has been invented, I repeat, invented, a new investigation, in another direction, has been started, in an effort to get out of the situation. On the one hand the intention was that the first campaign should be forgotten, that it should be laid aside, as we stated in the announcement of the BTA, and on the other hand — that the long-range campaign should continue according to plan, with new accusations, with new food, if I may put it that way, for the anti-Bulgarian and antisocialist campaign in the spirit of the crusades.

For me personally the fact that Antonov has now been informed, that another investigation is being started against him, this time for complicity in an attempt, to be more precise, in a plan to kill Lech Walesa, is an act of confession on the part of the Italian Department of Inquiry of the failure of their investigation against Antonov in connection with the attempt on the life of the Pope.

This is my comment, this, in brief is my opinion on this question.

Your second question. A colleague who is among you now, a colleague from West Europe, asked me two days ago, why we had published this announcement — the opinion expressed by the head of the Balkan Bulgarian Airlines after his meeting with Antonov.

We published it in order to declare to the Rome Department of Inquiry that it bears full responsibility for the health and the life of Antonov. That is the reason why we published it.

G u i d o P a l i a ('Giornale Nuovo' newspaper): On January 28 the investigating magistrate Martella sent a petition to your judicial authorities demanding information about the movements of Ali Agca in Bulgaria, more precisely Judge Martella asked whether it was true that Agca was detained, probably on the night of August 29, 1980 at a frontier check-point, or near the frontier and that two forged passports and the sum of 3,000 US dollars in cash were found on him. I would like to know whether the inquiry demanded by Martella has yielded any results and if possible some details concerning these results.

P e t e r S t a n c h e v ('Zemedelsko Zname' newspaper): Comrade Traikov, I would like to ask a question connected with the question of my Italian colleague. May I ask it?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Yes, please.

P e t e r S t a n c h e v: At the last press conference you conveyed the official invitation extended by the Bulgarian authorities to Ilario Martella and to other judges to visit our country and interrogate the persons they wished to see in connection with the charges brought against them. Now it is a matter of demands addressed to our country, and not visits. What is the answer to our official invitation?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: There are already two questions.

First, as to the question of our colleague Stanchev — what is the answer to our proposal for cooperation on a reciprocal basis — I underline reciprocal — with the Italian judicial authorities in seeking the truth on the questions which have arisen — I have in mind not only the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II, but some other questions too — such as for instance the Trento affair etc. As you know, we have extended such an invitation. So far we have received two answers. The first is a letter from Judge Martella in which he wants some information from us and says that he re-

serves the right to avail himself of our invitation. The other answer is from the investigating magistrate Palermo who expressed a desire to visit our country and make some inquiries. We immediately invited him to come and have been expecting him for quite a long time. It was announced that he would come on February 28. As far as I know representatives of our Prosecutor General's Office waited for him on the arrival of the airplane but he did not turn up. We are looking forward to his arrival and hope that he will come.

As for the first question put by our colleague from 'Giornale Nuovo' I think, I would like to ask for your opinion. We have sent an answer to Mr Martella. I would like to consult you: shall I read our answer to you? What I have in mind is that he made available his own letter to us to the Italian press. Does not this give us ground to present our answer to you all? If you agree I am ready to read it. I hope that since Judge Martella's letter has become known to the public, he won't object if we make public our answer to him.

G u i d o P a l i a ('Giornale Nuovo'): Mr Traikov, Judge Martella has not published his letter, this is news which has merely leaked and has been circulated. (M u c h a n i m a t i o n, l a u g h t e r.)

B o y a n T r a i k o v: All right, I shall not read the letter here. But you asked me what is our answer to Martella. How then can I possibly answer you!? ... (M o u n t i n g a n i m a t i o n)

V o i c e s: Read it, read it, Mr Traikov.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: The letter runs as follows:

'Distinguished Dr. Martella, with reference to your letter dated February 1983, the Prosecutor General of the People's Republic of Bulgaria ordered the investigating authorities to take all the necessary steps in order that an answer should be given to your demands.

'I have been authorized,' writes the respective person, 'to inform you that after thorough examination and inquiries the following has been established so far:

'First. In the 1979-1981 period no Turkish national named Mehmet Ali Agca has stayed in Bulgaria and there is not a single person here who knows him or has met him under this or any other name — such as Metin, Singh or Kahf. For this reason the questions concerning the motives for an eventual stay of Agca in

Bulgaria, with whom and with what people he had met or had any contacts, in which hotels and when he had stayed, cannot be answered.

'We are ready to continue the inquiries, if you send us a picture of Agca, and also the description of his external characteristics and distinguishing features, his addresses of residence, what he was doing and whether he knew anybody in Bulgaria and any other details which you might choose to give us.

'No data about a stay of a foreigner named Huseyin Kahf in Bulgaria has been found so far.

'On August 29-30, 1980 in the border area with Turkey, no person bearing this name was detained, nor any other person from whom a forged passport and 3000 US dollars have been taken, as you state in your letter.

'There is no town, village or locality by the name of Kapi Kule near Bulgaria's border with Turkey.

'The telephone number referred to in your letter is that of the exchange of Hotel Vitosha in Sofia, 62-41-51, and can be found in all the brochures and official documents of the hotel and also in official directory of the city of Sofia.

'There are no telephone numbers 12 431 or 13 421 in the city of Sofia or in the areas around it.

'Following a careful check it has been established that in 1980 18 persons named Yoginder Singh entered, temporarily resided in, and left the People's Republic of Bulgaria, all of them Indian citizens, born on different dates. Two or more persons bearing this name have stayed in Bulgaria at one and the same time in different periods of the same year.

'In order to broaden the scope of the inquiry and to establish whether Agca had stayed in this country under the name of one of these 18 persons, you should make known to us those assertions of Agca or of other persons, which might be useful for a possible identification.

'To your question what were the results of the investigations in Bulgaria in connection with the attempted papal assassination, we can inform you that many checks and inquiries have been made in connection with the reports in the Italian press and other West European newspapers, that the Bulgarian citizens Antonov, Aivazov and Vassilev and the Turkish citizen Bekir Celenk had

allegedly taken part in the preparations for the attempted assassination. It has been established beyond any doubt that the Bulgarian citizens have not taken any part in this attempt. Aivazov and Vassilev, and Celenk whom we are still keeping at your disposal, have denied during the numerous interrogations having had any contact with Agca whatsoever, and state that they do not know him and have never seen him, advancing relevant arguments in support of these statements.

'I have also been authorized to inform you that the Bulgarian prosecuting and investigating organs express once again their readiness to cooperate with you and the other judicial organs of the Italian Republic for revealing the objective truth.

'The exchange of more detailed information on the evidence collected could be done in the conditions of reciprocity.'

I once again express the hope that Mr Martella won't be angry with us. After all we have no secrets and we have no reasons not to announce our reply.

This is my answer to the colleague from 'Giornale Nuovo'.

Any other questions?

A n t o n V e r g i e v: (Bulgarian Television): I would like to know whether you have received another answer from the Italian side. In your interview, which was televised some time ago, you presented a very interesting, a very important fact: Rossitsa Antonova and her daughter Anna were not in Rome, or in Italy on May 10, 1981, they were in Sofia; and also that not only on that day but during the whole spring of 1981 Antonova was not in Italy. And Agca stated that on that day, May 10, 1981, both Antonova and her daughter were present at a conference in the home of Antonov, when the plot for the assassination of the Pope was discussed. What is the answer from Rome as far as these facts are concerned?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: The answer was indeed very strange.

The communique of the Rome Department of Inquiry said that since the Bulgarians possessed proof relevant to that matter, they should present it. What's so strange about that, you might ask. The strange thing is that we tell them the fact: Antonova was not in Rome at that time, we also tell them when she left Italy. What is the logic of asking us here from Sofia, to verify in Italy on Italian territory, actions which they can verify themselves? Can't they address their authorities at the frontier check points — I'd

like to emphasize again, aren't they seeking the truth? — and see for themselves what is recorded there. There are documents there certifying that she left Italy on May 8, 1981 by car, I can even be more specific — a FIAT 124 — Roma — P 06 794 through the frontier check point at Trieste. Why don't they check this fact?

Antonova spent the night of May 8 in the Tourist motel on Yugoslav territory, Nova Gradishka, near the village of Staro Petrovo, some 250 kilometres from Belgrade.

A n t o n V e r g i e v: Information might also be sought from a neutral country.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Yes. Why don't they ask the respective Yugoslav authorities and get this information?

Antonova was not in Rome in January when Agca claims to have met her in Piccadilly Restaurant. I think she was not in Rome during the whole of January. I would kindly ask them, since the Fiumicino Airport is much closer to Rome than it is to Sofia, to contact the officials at the frontier check point in Fiumicino and see that on December 29, 1980 Antonova flew to Bulgaria and returned to Italy on February 2, 1981 at the same airport. Consequently she was absent during the whole of January.

I apologize for saying so but I don't like the conduct of the respective authorities at all. I don't want to be rude, but you will agree with me, why don't they go and check for themselves at Fiumicino Airport which, I repeat, is some 20 kilometres away from Rome, rather than demanding information from us in Sofia. Where is the logic!

In my comment on the communique of the Rome Department of Inquiry I said: If anybody imagines that he can place us in the humiliating position of culprits who are seeking to prove their innocence, he is absolutely wrong. He doesn't know the dignity and the pride of the Bulgarian people!

I think that is enough.

A n t o n V e r g i e v: Thank you.

A n t o n i o F e r r a r i ('Corriere della Sera'): Mr Traikov, I am Antonio Ferrari from 'Corriere della Serra', Milan. There was a report in some Italian newspapers according to which the proof you have collected to refute Ali Agca, at least as far as the notorious conference on May 10 in Antonov's flat is concerned, had been collected — this is what it says in the report published in

Italy — with the help of western secret services too. I would like to know if this report corresponds to the truth?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Can anybody suppose, that we might, particularly in this case, cooperate with western secret, and I stress secret, services? How am I to understand that? The NATO allies which maintain allround cooperation, with secret services included — why, don't they have mutual trust, don't they assist each other? They are said to have split, some helping the other side and others helping us, is that the case? No! They work, I have good reason for saying so, in very close cooperation, their work is highly co-ordinated and not a single one of these western secret services has betrayed their Italian friends in order to start cooperating with us. This on the whole is ... ridiculous.

M i k l o s P e k (MTI): Comrade Traikov, do you think that in the anti-Bulgarian and anti-socialist campaign launched in connection with the so-called Antonov case, there is a tendency to deteriorate the relations between Bulgaria and Turkey, two neighbouring Balkan countries belonging to different military political blocs, but maintaining good neighbourly relations which are developing well?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Yes, it is true, it can be said that in this campaign launched against Bulgaria and against the socialist community in general there are elements which have the tendency to deteriorate our good neighbourly relations with the Republic of Turkey, our southern neighbour. But I have every reason to express an opinion that this tendency, that these aspirations of certain circles will not succeed. Only a few days ago Mr Turkmen, the Turkish Foreign Minister, visited our country as the guest of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bulgaria Peter Mladenov. Many of you here have probably seen the communique about their meeting. The desire was expressed in this communique that the two countries should develop the friendly good neighbourly relations of cooperation between the Republic of Turkey and the People's Republic of Bulgaria. So that I do not believe that these tendencies, these aspirations of certain circles, which some Turkish newspapers are incidentally helping to some degree, I do not believe that they will succeed.

V l a d i m i r T s a k o v (Bulgarian Radio): How do you assess the declarations of certain official US representatives about

the participation of the CIA in the investigation of the assassination attempt on the life of the Pope?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: This is indeed an interesting question. Because after this provocation was launched, this campaign against Bulgaria and other socialist countries, we justifiably arrived at the conclusion that this campaign has been organized with the very active, decisive participation and assistance of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States.

After the slanders began to collapse as a result of the fact that the charges against Antonov were collapsing, there appeared several statements, made though in an indirect way, but quite definitely by the Central Intelligence Agency, or to be more precise with sources there, according to which we Bulgarians had nothing to do with this affair. i.e. a tendency could be observed indicating that the Central Intelligence Agency had decided to dissociate itself from the affair and to present the matter as purely Italian. The impression was created that the CIA wanted to leave the Italians to pull their own chestnuts out of the fire, as our people says.

But now there are new developments. Under what pressure, prompted by what considerations, can it be assumed, that US President Reagan ordered the CIA to start an active investigation of the papal assassination attempt, i.e. to help the Italian services get out of the awkward situation in which they had in fact found themselves. This is how we understand this new activity of the CIA.

But there are some more questions here. Where will the CIA make these investigations? In its headquarters in Langley? Certainly not there. It should make them on Italian territory. But so far it has not become known that the Italians have asked the CIA for help. How are we to understand this? Isn't this an act of interference on the part of the USA into the internal affairs of Italy. I am amazed that the Italian government does not protest. How is it possible that another state, another secret intelligence organization should make inquiries into something which is, or at least has so far been presented as a purely Italian affair, a crime perpetrated on Italian territory. This is interference into the internal affairs of Italy and I am amazed that the Italians do not treat it as such and do not protest against it.

May be the new charge brought against Antonov, the new investigation, is the first step in the assistance which the CIA

wants to render to the Italian investigation, respectively to the Italian secret services. Since the accusation is made by Agca, it can be assumed that somebody hopes, probably hopes that it will be supported also by Scricciolo. By saying that this will probably be the help of the CIA, I have in mind the articles in the Polish press, and specifically in 'Trybuna Ludu', where it was indicated very precisely and unambiguously that Scricciolo is an agent of the CIA. No wonder that in this way the CIA wants to help, as Reagan has instructed, its Italian allies. That is so to say giving a helping hand to the ally.

The next question, please.

V l a d i m i r B a b k i n (TASS). Comrade Traikov, judging from some articles in the western press, it is trying to conceal the basic causes for that comedy. The western press is trying to shift everything onto the Italian secret services. What will you say to that? This was stated in the interview of Luigi Cavallo.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: I know the interview of Cavallo very well. It was said there that this Cavallo was a member of the Strategic Studies Centre of the United States. He is known to be an official of the United States. And a little while ago in my answer to our colleague Tsakov I had in mind this case too, the interview of Cavallo, when I said that during a certain period there was a tendency of the CIA to dissociate itself and to present the entire affair as purely Italian and as I said to leave the Italians to drink as they had brewed, that brew which was made with their help, or rather, which they mostly made themselves.

M a r c e l l o U g o l i n i: I work for the Italian Radio and Television, second channel. In your statement and in your reports you wanted to present the Italian investigating magistrates as instruments of an Italian political power, as a tool of the USA and the CIA. Now I would like to say that all the investigations of the 'Bulgarian connection' are not limited to the Antonov case alone. There is for instance the investigation in Trento. There is Bekir Celenk, there is evidence collected by the investigating magistrates in Trento which testifies to the fact that Henry Arsan, the Syrian citizen, a major figure in arms and drug traffic, was in contact with Bekir Celenk, and had his own operative central bureau here in Sofia, in Vitosha Hotel which was something like a headquarters of Bekir Celenk. Isn't there something suspicious in some connections still used here by Bekir Celenk, who still freely walks the streets of Sofia. Thank you.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: First of all, I would not wish you to walk so freely the streets of Sofia as Celenk does.

And further on. If you familiarize yourself thoroughly with the charges brought against Antonov, if you familiarize yourself with the course of the investigation as we have done, you will see that it is absolutely ungrounded and since the Rome Department of Inquiry is not releasing Antonov one cannot but come to the conclusion that there are other factors that exert influence, that this investigation serves a political provocation. There is no other explanation. As this man is innocent, and this is absolutely and irrefutably clear, then what reason other than a political machination and provocation can there be for his continuing detention in prison. And since this is done as the result of an order of the Rome Department of Inquiry it is quite normal for us to think and to say that it is in service of this provocation.

As to the second part of your question, a major plot has really been uncovered — at least the newspapers say so — for smuggling weapons and narcotic drugs in Trento, a town in Northern Italy. However, so far suspicion has not fallen on a single person who is a citizen of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. There is not a single fact to testify that Bulgaria, or more precisely Bulgarian bodies, Bulgarian services, Bulgarian commercial organizations etc., have anything to do with the discoveries in Trento. All that is written in the Italian newspapers, are general statements to the effect that a traffic route passes through Bulgaria, but there is nothing specific. Why? Because there cannot be anything specific.

Only one journalist furnished concrete facts. This was the 'great specialist' on the questions of smuggling and trafficking, the Turkish journalist Momcu. But when this 'great specialist', who had a document to prove the smuggling of weapons, was brought to trial by the respective Turkish firm, it was proved by a law court in Istanbul, that this document was forged and Momcu was sentenced to pay a fine for libel. That is how this single attempt to give a concrete proof ended.

Nothing indicated that Bulgarian organs or persons or commercial firms have anything to do or, I would add, could have anything to do with the traffic and smuggling of arms or narcotics. I would like to avail myself of the opportunity to tell you that in

our development, in our economic and social progress we rely on our own work, on what is created by the Bulgarian working class and cooperative farmers. We rely on these values and acquisitions, and not on dollars which might be obtained by smuggling. This runs counter to the essence of our socialist construction and development.

The next question, please.

A n d r e y S m i r n o v (TASS): The question of my Italian colleague has suggested to me the following question: In the present campaign, which has been going on for a very long time and which is directed not only against Bulgaria but also against other socialist countries, including the Soviet Union, attempts can be seen to accuse the socialist countries of rendering assistance to terrorist groupings in the NATO member countries, with a view to destabilizing the internal political situation in these countries. With what proof do they support their allegations and with what proof do the mass information media operate in support of these charges?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: After the Reagan Administration took office in the USA, like every new president who wants to make his mark by introducing something new, Reagan too decided to raise the question of international terrorism — thus wanting to kill two birds with one stone; to accuse the socialist countries of being exporters of terrorism and to justify this phenomenon which is an organic feature of the capitalist world of today. However, all speeches on that subject and all articles in the western mass media are but empty talk containing nothing concrete. And there could not be anything concrete, for the socialist countries not only do not export terrorism to the capitalist countries in order to destabilize them, not only do not help the terroristic groupings and organizations in the capitalist countries, but, on the contrary, condemn terrorism and contribute to the struggle against international terrorism. We have given such examples on more than one occasion, we have repeatedly pointed out the contribution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria to the struggle against international terrorism — a contribution for which we have been given official government appreciation. No one has presented proof of these allegations so far and could not present any.

On the other hand however I would like to present to you a testimony and please note, it is not our proof, it is a proof supplied by the western countris, by NATO, that the socialist count-

ries do not support terrorism in Western Europe. I will read an excerpt from a report on terrorism submitted by Mr Mayer, head of the intelligence service of the Federal Republic of Germany, to the NATO Council early in 1982, only a year ago, as it is now early 1983. This is a report bearing the sign NATO-classified which reads in part:

‘There is no evidence to support an assumption that there exists an international terrorist network to direct the terrorist actions in the world, nor is there any evidence that the USSR is playing a key role in terrorism.’

What does that mean? That at its sessions, within its own circles, NATO reckons with reality, with the real state of affairs, i.e. that the USSR and the other socialist countries neither give support to nor have any other connections with the terrorist groupings in Western Europe. But outside its quarters, for propaganda purposes, for the public opinion, they claim that we are organizing and supporting terrorism. This is the truth, as shown by the document I am referring to.

And to be still more precise I will read the next few lines. ‘And yet,’ it is said, ‘it is known that the countries of the Soviet bloc train and render material support to individual terrorist organizations, but for the time being there is no proof of any of these organizations having taken part in an action in one of the NATO member countries.’

Here it is said, and the point deserves special notice, what they mean by ‘some terrorist organizations.’ An example is given: It is known that a representative of the Cuban state security has helped a communist from El Salvador in Canada.

No one could possibly regard the struggle of the people of El Salvador for national and social liberation as an act of a terrorist organization. This is a national liberation movement. It is generally known that we have really backed, are backing and will back the national liberation movements in their just struggle. For us this is a matter of international duty. But no one has the moral or any other right to call the national liberation movements terrorist acts. They constitute an open, honest revolutionary struggle for freedom and progress. Some of mankind’s brightest minds have been fighters for freedom and progress. Could any one here, especially the Italian colleagues, dare to call Garibaldi a terrorist? He is a national hero of Italy, who fought for the freedom and progress of Italy.

A l d o B e l l o (Italian Television — first channel): Mr Traikov, there is one point I would like to make clear here. Antonov is not involved in a new investigation. He has only been warned that he might be interrogated in a new investigation. Consequently there is no new charge against him.

Besides I would like to elucidate one more thing which is related to the first one. On the one hand you claim that you have received much of your information from the Italian press. Others say that the Italian press is trying to conceal the failure of the 'Antonov case'. I think I shall be speaking for all colleagues here if I say that we write freely and that if it turns out that Antonov is innocent, we shall say that he is innocent.

And here is my question. You claim to have received information from the Italian press. On the other hand somebody here said that the Italian press is trying to conceal the fact that the 'Antonov case' has been a failure. We were the first to bring to light the contradictions in the so called 'disclosures' of Agca. This is exactly what I mean: that we shall keep performing our professional duty.

And now having made this clear, I will ask you: You claim that the exchange of information should be reciprocal. The investigating magistrate Palermo, who is expected to come to Bulgaria, and the investigating magistrate Martella, if he comes, in what capacity will they be present here? Will they be able to conduct interrogations directly or not? What restrictions will they have to comply with?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Sir, thank you for explaining that the summons does not mean that an investigation is being held and a charge brought against Antonov. This I know well. But the summons, though not an accusations that Antonov was involved in a plot to kill Lech Walesa, was published in all your Italian newspapers and many West European newspapers, on the front pages under big headlines. What is the literal meaning of the legal wording? Has an indictment been brought in or not? All West European newspapers carried the news on their front pages. It was presented in this light to the West European public. In this way the idea that Antonov and hence the Bulgarians had plotted to kill not only the Pope but also Lech Walesa has been impressed upon the minds of these millions of people. What does this legal wording amount to — whether an indictment has been brought in or not?

For the world public opinion the accusation exists. This is what matters to us. We are not indifferent to what the world public opinion, the millions of people living in Western Europe think of us, of the honest Bulgarian people. This is what we are protesting against. And as for the formulation itself? Let's leave it to the lawyers.

As for the fact that we draw information, and this is true, solely from the Italian newspapers, while you declare that some people say that they conceal the truth, I will say:

One must not and cannot speak of the Italian newspapers as a whole. They are not and they cannot possibly be a whole. Some of them do conceal the truth, others conceal less of the truth and still others conceal nothing of the truth and I have to admit that this does us credit. Thus for instance a communique was issued by the Rome Department of Inquiry and I made a comment on this communique. Some of the Italian newspapers published the communique and also my commentary. I do not wish to particularize here, but I will say that some Italian newspapers carried only the communique and not a word was mentioned about the reply which I gave in my commentary. So that the Italian newspapers when spoken about should not be referred to as a whole. They are different, they stand on different positions, have different sentiments and different interests. Some serve the purposes of one party, others — of another party, you know these things better than I do.

As to your question whether investigating magistrate Palermo, if he comes, as he is expected to, will be able to conduct his investigations directly? What else do you expect — quite naturally he is coming here to interrogate the Turkish national Bekir Celenk, and naturally, he will interrogate him directly. In what other way could that possibly be done? It could not possibly be otherwise. A room will be made available to him and all other facilities and he will interrogate him. This is universally accepted, and this is quite normal. When we offer our cooperation we offer it sincerely and in full compliance with the respective legal norms of conducting an investigation.

M à r c e l l o U g o l i n i (Second programme of the Italian Radio and Television): Here it was said that very strange things are being written in Italy. What I consider really strange is the following: that you demand Agca's photograph from Judge Martella,

while at the same you follow very closely what we write in Italy. I would like to inform you that all Italian newspapers published the photos of Agca. Consequently I think that you could take them from there.

You mentioned Bekir Celenk. I couldn't understand — has Bekir Celenk been arrested or is he under control.

And finally, as far as the CIA is concerned and its interference in Italian affairs. I would like to remind you that 'The New York Times' which is one of the biggest American newspapers, if not the biggest, carried an article criticizing the activity of the Italian secret services. I would like to know your opinion on this question. Thank you!

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Why do we want the photos of Mehmet Ali Agca? There are two reasons: naturally I do not know what were the considerations of our investigating authorities, but I will tell you my personal opinion. First — whoever seeks the truth and wants our cooperation should also present the respective materials. This is a principle, this is something quite normal, we are not the ones that should seek these things.

And second— if we use the Italian newspapers, the respective investigating authorities can find in them reporter's photos as they are called. And when an investigation is being conducted, things should be quite precise: photos needed are of the type used by the respective investigating authorities, in Italy, in Bulgaria and in the whole world. Photos which precisely, clearly and definitely show the externals and the distinguishing features of the respective person, so we want, or to be more precise, our investigating authorities want specialized photos, photos which are used by the investigation and not by reporters in the newspapers.

I couldn't understand your question about 'The New York Times'?

M a r c e l l o U g o l i n i: Recently 'The New York Times' published an article in which it was stated that the CIA, consequently the US secret services, had criticized the activity of the Italian authorities and the Italian secret services as regards the whole operation, the whole 'Antonov case'. I would like to know why you think that the US secret services are interfering in Italy's affairs? Or to be more precise do you have any proof of that? Naturally this is a question addressed to you.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: I have already given an answer to that question. There was a period of time when one had the impression, whether justified or not, that the CIA wanted to dissociate itself from the affair and to leave the Italian authorities, the Italian secret services to cope on their own since the case was collapsing and the CIA wanted to preserve its reputation. This could account for the article carried in 'The New York Times' and also some other articles, and that of Cavallo which was mentioned by our colleague from TASS. I suppose that later the CIA decided to correct its mistake and not only covertly, but also officially and actively to help its friends who were involved by the CIA in this affair, so that they can get out of it. As for the interference which I mentioned, I really meant it. What I have in mind is the following: at present on the official instruction of President Reagan, a special group has been set up in USA, at the CIA, with the task of investigating the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II. But since the Italian authorities are not known to have demanded such help from the CIA, this cannot be interpreted in any other way than as an interference in the internal affairs of Italy. Why should the CIA, working in the USA, investigate the papal assassination attempt in the centre of Rome in St Peter's Square? In international relations this is called interference in the internal affairs of another country.

G i u l i o B o r e l l i (Italian television — first channel): Mr Traikov, I would like to go back to the letter which you sent as a reply to the letter of Judge Martella. You claim that in 1980, 18 foreigners by the name of Yoginder Singh — I am not sure whether I am pronouncing it correctly, passed through your country. But it has not been specified in the letter whether a person of the name of Yoginder Singh stayed in Vitosha Hotel in the period from early July to late August 1980. You claim that 18 persons of that name passed through Bulgaria but it has not been specified whether a particular tourist has stayed in the hotel and this is something which can easily be confirmed or refuted. It can be checked in other hotels in Sofia. Consequently such a check, whether a citizen of this name, an Indian, has stayed in any of the bigger hotels in Sofia, would be very easily made, and the question requires a very precise answer.

The second question concerns the secret services. Naturally it is difficult for everybody to find his way about both among the

western and the eastern European secret services. But you said before, and now you have repeated it, that the CIA dissociates itself from the Italians leaving them to pull their own chestnuts out of the fire. You know that in the West there are different views about the 'Bulgarian trail'. But you also know that if we want to interpret certain facts, certain declarations, I for one, and I think that some of my colleagues here, are surprised that in the evidence produced here by you there is an interview of Luigi Cavallo which you have even published in 'Sofia News' and which is among the documents you have used in this press conference. In Italy Mr Luigi Cavallo even putting it quite mildly, is something of a suspicious person. I think that it is declarations like that of Mr Luigi Cavallo which might serve to promote another thesis which at the moment is becoming very popular — that things have come to the point when everything should be hushed up, so that a favourable climate should be provided, and the way should be paved for a possible meeting between Andropov and Reagan, because right now it is in the interest of all to safeguard peace. Thank you!

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Mr Borelli, you are quite right that it is no problem at all to make a check as to who stayed in Vitosha Hotel for instance and when. We — naturally you understand that when I say we I mean the respective authorities, have made the necessary checks. But, to your surprise, I can tell you that, though much has been said so far about the notorious room No 911 — if my memory is correct, where the meetings were said to have been held, where Agca was alleged to have stayed, Agca's stay in the Vitosha Hotel is discounted in the letter of investigating magistrate Martella. This is the truth. According to Martella Agca has not stayed in the Vitosha Hotel. And you know how much that room No 911 was talked about. Enough on that question.

On the other question. What various people intend to do in order to hush up this affair which the Italian investigation and its organizers are involved in, I do not know. I feel that there is such a tendency, that some people in order to get out of the awkward situation resort to the following variant: better draw a veil over the whole story, allegedly in the name of world peace. That would mean to leave the world public opinion with the impression that the Bulgarians are really assailants, plotters of assassinations, etc. and that the matter is hushed up in the name of world peace. What

dedicated peace champions we suddenly have here!

Now let me tell you: for some this story may appear as a way out of the deadlock they themselves had got into. But we do not agree and cannot agree with such a solution. We insist and shall insist that this inquiry be carried through, that the whole truth about the organization of this provocation and of this campaign be revealed and we do not agree to have this affair hushed up at any cost. We stand for peace. For us peace is something sacred and we do not agree that it should be obtained through shameful insinuations reflecting on the honour of the Bulgarian people!

V a l e r y M a k e e v (Soviet Television): I would like to take up the question of our Hungarian colleague concerning the goals of the propaganda being carried out in connection with this case. Don't you think, Comrade Traikov, that it is obvious from the very beginning that the western propaganda has been scheming, in connection with the 'Antonov case', to cause complications in the traditional comradely relations existing between the Bulgarian and the Polish people, and more particularly to cause distrust between the two peoples. I think that this is an extremely dishonest way of acting, having in mind the recent developments in Poland. Today the accusation is evolving in that direction. I think that this is a dishonest political game and if the Italian colleagues are now dissociating themselves from the propaganda of their respective services, then we should like to know what motives they are guided by: the sick Agca with his inventions or the pursuit of the truth. I appreciate the efforts of the Italian colleagues to arrive at the truth.

Why do they not direct their energies as zealously to the solution of their own problems, for instance the struggle against the mafia, but take such pains to maintain dubious versions in connection with this case aimed at undermining the prestige of socialist Bulgaria, which has on more than one occasions proved that it is making its contribution to the struggle against terrorism? What do you think as a journalist about this conduct of the Italian press, of the Italian colleagues who want to be given the trust of their Bulgarian colleagues, while seeking each and every opportunity to accuse Bulgaria and other socialist countries?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: My colleague who asked the question, whose name I did not hear, in fact answered the question himself. If he wants me to comment on the conduct of my Italian col-

leagues and particularly these who are present here, I am sorry but I cannot do this, because I am the host here and for this reason I must treat my colleagues with hospitality and good will.

G u i d o G e r o s a: ('Giorno' newspaper): Mr Traikov, I have two questions to ask. The first one: You have twice mentioned Luigi Cavallo. At present almost everyone in Italy knows that Luigi Cavallo has for more than 20 years been financing centres acting against the trade unions and has been involved in many plots against the Italian state. How is it possible that you who know so well the state of affairs in Italy should attach so much importance to the pronouncements of this shady character that you have dedicated to them two whole pages in your publications?

And my second question, which I consider very important — about the passport of Rossitsa Antonova: what passport did Antonov's wife carry — a diplomatic passport or some other kind of passport? Obviously this passport has the entry and exit dates stamped on it, as well as the registration made by the Italian police. You are right in saying that it is the job of the Italian investigating authorities to make the case clear. But I'd like to say that when a major plot is concerned, a plot on an international scale — here I am also giving an answer to my Hungarian colleague — we, Italians and Bulgarians alike, have a stake in the matter. If Antonov is innocent we'll be the first to admit it. We ask you, the Bulgarians, why don't you produce Rossitsa's passport and show it to the international press and the question will be settled once and for all?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: You seem to know this Luigi Cavallo quite well. And we did not have the slightest idea about him. We read his interview in the bulletin of the news agency, I don't remember its name (v o i c e s — ANIPE*) and it was stated there that he was a member of the Strategic Studies Centre in the USA, which sounds quite authoritative. For this reason naturally that interview drew our attention.

I think that makes it clear.

As for the other question — Rossitsa Antonova travelled with an ordinary passport. Her husband Sergei Antonov does not possess diplomatic immunity so she cannot have a diplomatic passport.

* ANIPE — National Agency for Political and Economic Information.

Why don't we present to you Antonova's passport? I have just said — it is a matter of principle. Here the question is not that I could flourish this passport here, as Bekir Celenk did. It is a question of principle. Why should we prove here things which have been documented in Italy precisely and clearly? Please understand, we cannot possibly accept the position which some people want to place us in: that of children who feel guilty and are trying to justify themselves.

I said and I want you to understand this — it is not in the character of the Bulgarian people.

In this connection I suggest you read the text of a Bulgarian folk song about the iron will and the great pride of the Bulgarians personified in the image of Yovo, the indomitable mountain-dweller, who proudly faced the enemy during the Ottoman domination. We can sacrifice everything but not our pride and honour.

We shall not allow anyone to treat us like ... I apologize: I almost lost my temper.

Let us continue calmly.

E v g e n i S t a n c h e v: ('Pogled' newspaper): I am a journalist of the 'Pogled' weekly — organ of the Union of Bulgarian Journalists, which carried the interview with Cavallo.

Almost all Italian colleagues who took the floor here, speak about their press in flattering terms. Allow me please to say that our press is not inferior to theirs. More particularly I would like to tell explain to you how we publish the articles. This matter is decided by the editorial board of the newspaper. We think that the interview of Cavallo was worth publishing, for the information of those who had not read it and did not know what Cavallo said. We recommend to those who have not read the interview to read it — we recommend it both to the Italian and to the Bulgarian colleagues.

I would like to ask the colleague from 'Giorno' who was indignant at the fact that we had published the interview in our newspaper, whether his paper has ever asked the question on its pages about the conversation at the home of Antonov — in what language was it held? Maybe those secret services which were mentioned by the colleague from 'Corriere della Sera', were present there as interpreters? Antonov speaks Bulgarian, Italian and French, and Agca speaks Turkish and a little English.

Maybe Comrade Traikov possesses some information about this question from the western press or the investigation has thrown light on this strange fact in one way or another? Or perhaps 'Giorno' has an answer to this question?

Thank you!

B o y a n T r a i k o v: In my interview on Bulgarian Television I asked many questions which of course were addressed to the Italian investigating magistrates. One of these questions was the following: in what language did the plotters communicate? But to this and to many other questions no answer was given.

A n t o n i o F e r r a r i ('Corriere della Sera'): I would like to answer my Bulgarian colleague. Just a moment please.

Mr Traikov, regrettably this press conference has turned for one reason or another into a series of small rallies. We came here because we were convinced that we would speak on concrete problems concerning the investigation. I am coming back to the subject.

What I absolutely cannot accept as an Italian journalist is that the Bulgarian journalist, and also the colleague from the Soviet Television and some other colleagues from the eastern countries want to give us lessons in journalism and freedom.

I heard somebody say that the Italian press is concealing certain facts. The Italian press does not conceal anything. Mr Traikov knows only too well that the Italian newspapers are striving to bring to light certain contradictions in the version of Agca.

I would like to remind the Bulgarian colleague who intervened here and said that the Bulgarian journalists are free to decide what to publish within the editorial boards, that on the day following the press conference held on December 17, 1982 in Sofia, I read the Bulgarian papers and understood that there were 150 Bulgarian journalists present at the conference and at least 20 of them asked questions.

With reference to the freedom of the press I would like to remind the Bulgarian colleague that on the same day a report about the press conference was published in four Bulgarian newspapers under one and the same headline, with the same text, released by the BTA, without any difference whatsoever. If this is freedom of the press, and if those journalists are trying to give us a lesson in freedom of the press, I do not accept it.

I have no more to say on that question.

I would like to ask Mr Traikov a question.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Sir, in order to understand what freedom of the press is I will tell you that the whole press conference held on December 17, the complete documentary record, from the first down to the last word, lasting three and a half hours was broadcast on the Bulgarian Television. The full verbatim report from the first to the last word with all your questions and with all my answers, with all comments, was published in this book (B o y a n T r a i k o v s h o w s a c o p y o f t h e b o o k 'T h e A n a t o m y o f a S l a n d e r C a m p a i g n'). This is complete democracy and freedom of covering the event, in this case in particular, I have in mind the press conference.

A n t o n i o F e r r a r i: Mr Traikov, I said this first because I want to mention something more specific. You have just said something which I consider inaccurate. You said that the investigation in which Antonov is now being involved has been started at the last moment since the main investigation of the papal assassination attempt is collapsing. I would like to remind you that the investigation of the Scricciolo case preceded the one of the assassination attempt against the Pope and is an investigation in which a charge was brought against two Bulgarian diplomats by the Italian court. These two Bulgarian diplomats are now in their country and the embassy has refused permission for any actions to be taken against them.

Consequently it is not correct to state that the investigation of the Scricciolo case was held in reserve for the investigation of the papal assassination attempt. These are two separate investigations which have some points of contact, and these points of contact are employees and diplomats in the embassy in Rome, who have been involved.

While you and the Bulgarian press are all the time very concerned about Antonov you don't seem to be feeling the same way as far as Scricciolo is concerned and also the Bulgarian diplomats being involved. In this context I would like to ask you why the Bulgarian diplomats were recalled from Sofia and were not in Italy when Judge Imposimato looked for them.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: What was your actual question? Would you please repeat your last sentence?

A n t o n i o F e r r a r i: Mr Traikov, you know the names of the Bulgarian diplomats involved in the investigation of the Scric-

ciolo case. Do you know them and why were they hastily recalled to Sofia when investigating magistrate Imposimato had issued a warrant for their arrest?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: I will answer your question. I have not said and I cannot say that the 'Scricciolo case' has come out now. The arrest of Scricciolo and the investigation of the case precedes Antonov's arrest. What I said, and it is true, is that the charges brought against Antonov of complicity with Agca and Scricciolo in a plot for the assassination of Lech Walesa — these have just become public, and exactly at the time when it is clear for all that the charges concerning the papal assassination attempt, more precisely I mean the charges against Antonov, are failing, are collapsing, and in order to fuel the anti-Bulgarian and anti-socialist campaign so that it might continue and gain fresh vigour, this new case was brought to the fore.

I should tell you that we were sure that something of the kind would appear, I don't mean that this was the very thing that we were expecting but something of the kind. Why? The logic is simple — because we were absolutely convinced that the charges against Antonov of complicity in the attempt on the life of the Pope could not be sustained, since they do not correspond to the truth. Regrettably we were sure also of the fact that the Italian investigating authorities would not acknowledge their mistake and would not say 'we are sorry'. Because this has not been provided for in the plan for the campaign launched against us. It was clear that a way out would be sought; now it turns out that there was a plot for the assassination of Lech Walesa, too.

I can tell you another thing if you wish. We are expecting a third variant to appear. What variant? God knows. Because the accusation concerning a plot against Lech Walesa cannot be sustained either, and it will collapse because it is absurd, it is a fabrication, it is only a concoction; it has been invented so that the anti-Bulgarian campaign might continue and a way out might be found. So one should not wonder if a third version is invented.

A n t o n i o F e r r a r i: Mr Traikov, you haven't answered my question. What I meant was the diplomats of the Bulgarian Embassy in Rome who were called back to their country in June.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: There has not been a single case over the past ten years of a Bulgarian diplomat returning from Rome before his term of office had expired. All of them served their

terms of office and came back after that. I do not know these two Bulgarian diplomats. But how were they to know that the Italian side would accuse them? Their names are only being mentioned now.

A n t o n i o F e r r a r i: They are Georgi Georgiev and Ivan Donchev.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: I know from the Italian press only the name of Ivan Donchev. He came back exactly on time when his term of office in the Bulgarian Embassy in Rome had expired. He did not come back before that, because he had no reason to do so.

I m a d a l K s u s ('Jordan Times' — Jordan): We Arabs highly value the unreserved and unlimited assistance which Bulgaria and the other socialist countries render to our peoples in the struggle for national liberation and in defence of our social, political and economic independence.

How far do you think can the US attempts go in checking the construction of the gas pipeline between the Soviet Union and Western Europe and interfering with the peaceful coexistence among the peoples in Europe and throughout the world?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: I would like to thank you for the gratitude which you express to our country for its solidarity with the struggle of the Arab peoples for independence and social progress. I can assure you that in the name of our international duty, which we regard as sacred and try to perform to the best of our abilities, the Bulgarian people will in the future, too, continue to support the national liberation movement in the world, including also the Arab national liberation movement, will continue to support the struggle for independence and social progress.

As far as the gas pipeline between Siberia and Western Europe is concerned, it is true that there have been many attempts, and resolute attempts at that (all of us remember the embargo imposed by US President Reagan), to hinder and check the construction of this gas pipeline. But it is not within the power of anybody to do this. The Soviet people, the Soviet technology, the Soviet scientific and technical thought, the Soviet production and industrial potential was and is in a position to solve all problems and no sanctions can check the construction of this gas pipeline. On the contrary, the Soviet people, and to be more precise the people working on the construction of the gas pipeline responded to these

sanctions, to the attempts of the Reagan Administration with great determination and still greater labour enthusiasm and within record-breaking terms continued the construction of the gas pipeline to Western Europe.

Please, you have the floor for asking other questions.

M o h a m m e d M o h a m m e d ('Al Yassar al Arabi' magazine — Iraq): The Beirut press published a report according to which the Turkish Foreign Minister during his visit to Bulgaria demanded the extradition of Bekir Celenk to Turkey. What would your comment be on this?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: I will answer your question. But before that I would like to dwell on another question in connection with the visit of the Turkish Foreign Minister to Bulgaria. Many newspapers carried an announcement that during the visit to our country of the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey Mr Turkmen, the Bulgarian side informed him that 500 smugglers had been expelled from this country. It is impossible that we should make such a statement because we have no knowledge of there being 500 smugglers in Bulgaria. It is true Mr Turkmen was informed that after all these events took place we decided that we should not be so tolerant and should check whether there are people staying in Bulgaria for a longer period of time without any reason, i.e. people, foreigners who are not studying here and who stay in the country for a period longer than a normal tourist visit, people who do not have official business contacts with Bulgarian foreign trade firms etc., people who are not here for medical treatment, because there are indeed many foreigners who are undergoing treatment in our country. People, residing here without any definite reason, were invited to leave the country. The reference was, therefore, to this kind of people, and not to smugglers. Naturally it is possible that some of these people might have been involved in suspicious activities but we do not know this. People who cannot justify and explain their stay in Bulgaria for a longer period of time were invited to leave the country.

As for Celenk's extradition it is true that there has been a demand from the Republic of Turkey to extradite Bekir Celenk for smuggling a certain amount of copper, and for illegal hard currency transfers. The Prosecutor General's Office of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, an independent body in Bulgaria, in whose competence it is to deal with such matters, is considering this question.

I would like to tell you my opinion on the matter. Bekir Celenk is placed under control in Bulgaria because of a charge of complicity in the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II. Consequently only after this question is elucidated will the problem of Bekir Celenk's being kept under control by the Bulgarian authorities be solved, i.e. his extradition.

When matters are considered they should be ordered according to their priority. Which is more important — the several tons of copper which Celenk is said to have smuggled, if this is true, or complicity in the assassination attempt against the Head of the Roman Catholic Church? Naturally, we should give priority to the accusations of a major crime, to that which is of international importance, to the crime which the whole world speaks about, and only then, only after this question is elucidated, can we come back to the question of Celenk's extradition so that he could be brought to trial for smuggling copper.

P a s q u a l i n o C a n u ('Messaggero' newspaper): It seems to me that, I apologize for saying so, we are getting off the point, off the subject of this meeting which you were kind enough to organize.

I heard somebody mention, and it gave me great pleasure, the gratitude of some colleagues from the Arab countries for the assistance rendered by Bulgaria to these countries. Nevertheless I think that these questions are not within the subject we are considering at the present press conference.

You already answered the question which I wanted to ask, saying that at the present moment Bulgaria will not permit the extradition of Celenk to Turkey, at the demand of Turkey. I would like you to make it clear for me what exactly you have in mind (because you all the time keep repeating one and the same sentence) by saying that Bekir Celenk is kept under control? In what way — is he in prison or is he living in a villa?

I have another question too: investigating magistrate Carlo Palermo from Trento is expected to come to Bulgaria shortly. Perhaps his visit is forthcoming. You have specified that investigating magistrate Palermo will be given the opportunity to interrogate Bekir Celenk directly. We took this into consideration and were satisfied. But I would like to ask you if after the interrogation investigating magistrate Palermo demands from the Bulgarian authorities, if he asks the Bulgarian authorities whether they will

permit the extradition of Bekir Celenk to Italy after the investigation ends, will the Bulgarian government grant such a demand or not?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Your first question — what exactly do we mean by saying that Bekir Celenk is kept under the control of the Bulgarian authorities. I will speak very slowly, sir, so that you can write everything down if you wish.

Since we have not been presented with accusations, precise, clear and definite accusations, against Bekir Celenk of complicity in the attempt on the life of the Pope, we do not have the right, the legal right, to keep Bekir Celenk in prison. For this reason when we say under the control of the Bulgarian authorities we mean 'under supervision' in legal language. This means that he does not have the right to leave the territory of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, that he should be at the disposal of the respective authorities under whose control he is kept and that when the Bulgarian or Italian investigating authorities (I mean the investigating magistrate Palermo) want him for questioning he should be at their disposal to answer their questions.

I think I was clear enough.

To go on.

If after the interrogation the investigating magistrate Palermo demands Celenk's extradition, I will answer the following:

First, there should be a petition for extradition from Palermo.

Second, this petition should correspond to the norms of international legal relations.

Third, the reasons should be presented for demanding that extradition and then the Prosecutor General's Office of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, after examining all the materials on the case, will decide whether the Turkish national Bekir Celenk should be extradited or not. Nobody can answer this question in advance, nobody has the right to speak on behalf of the independent prosecutor's office of the People's Republic of Bulgaria.

T i t t o S a n s a ('Stampa' newspaper): You said that we are crusaders and that the Italian jurisdiction is taking part in a slander campaign against the socialist countries. You also referred to the independence of the Bulgarian jurisdiction. As we know two Italians are being tried for espionage in Sofia. At 10.30 this morning the trial was suspended so that, in my opinion, journalists will have the opportunity to take part in this press conference. Could

it be that the Bulgarian jurisdiction is dependent on propaganda? (L a u g h t e r).

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Frankly speaking, I hear from you for the first time that the trial was suspended at 10.30 this morning. I don't know, I have no information about this, but I can't imagine that this was done on account of my meeting with you. This could hardly be the reason because as you see more than one hundred colleagues are present here whereas only three Italian journalists have been permitted to attend the trial and I do not think their absence would have mattered that much for this meeting of ours.

A B u l g a r i a n j o u r n a l i s t: One of them is a 'Stampa' correspondent, Comrade Traikov.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Yes. It is most unlikely that this should be the reason — that the court should have taken into account our present meeting for the sake of these three journalists.

There, I see yet another Italian friend of mine — Graziano Motta.

G r a z i a n o M o t t a: (Italian information agency ANSA): I am one of the three Italian journalists attending the trial. In order to establish the truth I must tell our colleague here that the trial has not been suspended. Two of us came here to the press conference out of our own will and another colleague of ours from the 'Repubblica' newspaper — Rome, remained in the courtroom to follow the development (of the trial — editor's note).

This is for clarity's sake. Our colleague must have been misinformed. (B u r s t o f l a u g h t e r. A p p l a u s e)

B o y a n T r a i k o v: The next question, please.

A n I t a l i a n j o u r n a l i s t: Mr Traikov, we asked you, for there was such talk in Italy, whether Bulgaria in order to refute the charges brought against Sergei Antonov had not resorted to the assistance of Western secret services. You told us that this was impossible. But immediately afterwards as Luigi Cavallo and 'Sofia News' were referred to, Cavallo was represented as a CIA man. This was the first contradiction which you partially tried to avoid by saying that probably there had been a change of course under the influence of President Reagan which, if I may be excused, is something which has yet to be proved.

Secondly, the Syrian Henry Arsan was mentioned. Since 1972 Arsan has been in the service of the Americans — NADEA. Henry

Arsan had often collaborated with Bekir Celenk in Bulgaria too. I think it is highly unlikely that there could have been two coincidences.

Firstly, the above-mentioned interview with Luigi Cavallo — a CIA man, a man who speaks in your favour, and secondly, that you had not known that a US agent had cooperated with a Turk who, it is true, is not a Bulgarian, but has used Bulgaria as a base for his operations.

Thank you.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Sir, to begin with, we were not the ones who interviewed Cavallo. That interview had been published in Italy and we simply re-printed it. But if I follow the logic of your question — that Arsan had been a CIA agent who had worked with ...

A v o i c e i n t h e h a l l: NADEA is a different American service.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: All right. He being a collaborator of that US service and should I follow the logic of your words — that he had worked with Bekir Celenk and that our secret services had allegedly worked with Bekir Celenk and so on and so forth — I arrive at the conclusion that what you are implying is that we collaborate with the US services and with the CIA. This is how it turns out to be. Do you believe this is likely to be the case? Can such an idea strike you or anyone else as even remotely possible? I beg your pardon but it seems ludicrous to me.

Since our discussion has been going on for more than two hours now I suggest that we should be considering its termination, limiting ourselves to a few more questions which have a more direct bearing on the substance of our subject.

G e o r g i I l i e v ('Troud' newspaper): Comrade Traikov, in your latest interview on the television you expressed an opinion about the way the investigation against Antonov is being conducted in Rome. Certain mass media in the West interpreted and commented on your statement as an attack against Judge Martella. The official reply on the part of the Italian side was in the same vein. In the final count what is your opinion of Judge Martella?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: In my interview I did not address a personal accusation to Judge Martella. I referred to the Italian inquiry, more precisely to the Rome Department of Inquiry in charge of the investigation of Antonov's case. What I had in mind

was that Judge Martella is not and cannot be acting on his own. This case is too responsible for anyone to be able to afford such a luxury as burdening a single man with such juridical and political responsibility.

As far as Judge Martella is concerned he is described in the Italian press as an exacting and scrupulous investigator, a man of principle who is incorruptible, the Lockheed affair being quoted as an example etc., to put it in a nutshell, the perfect examining magistrate.

Having in mind what the development of the inquiry against Antonov has shown and that the untenability of the accusation against him became obvious and still Judge Martella keeps him in prison, I am awfully sorry but I cannot agree with these qualifications of Martella published in the Italian press.

I could naturally say something more for I have information as you may suppose about Martella, but I shall refrain from doing so for the time being.

I should like to say something more. I have just received a report from Rome that Antonov's health has deteriorated. This gives me justification to say once again that the Italian inquiry, the Rome Department of Inquiry, bears the full responsibility for the health and life of the Bulgarian citizen, the wrongly accused Sergei Antonov. I particularly ask the Italian colleagues to make this statement public and the Rome Department of Inquiry to remember it very well.

Next question, please.

A n I t a l i a n j o u r n a l i s t: In Rome the news you just talked about — Antonov's health — is much discussed. I would like to ask you something but not for the sake of polemics: You have just said that you could add a few other things about Judge Martella but you reserve the right to say them some other time. This sounded to me like an insinuation about a judge who at this moment is in charge of one of the most important inquiries being held in Italy at the present time — an inquiry which directly interests and affects you Bulgarians. Do you not think it appropriate to explain these insinuations about Judge Martella?

Thank you.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: There is no insinuation. What I meant was the deteriorating health of Sergei Antonov. It could not be

accidental. A young man of 34 and as our people say, sound and kicking, arrested but three months ago and already his health is in poor condition. This is it. No insinuations.

And now, colleagues, I should like to read five or six lines to you ...

I t a l i a n j o u r n a l i s t: Mr Traikov ...

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Just a moment, please, let me read you five or six lines out of yesterday's 'Popolo', the organ of the Christian Democratic Party which reads as follows: 'A mere several hours had elapsed since the arrest of Antonov and the Bulgarian authorities already proposed a kind of exchange of spies. Italy immediately said: "No". Bulgaria, however, did not give up and both via official and unofficial channels reiterated its proposal several times. It became clear at once that the Bulgarian side had already prepared "a commodity ready for exchange".'

What is referred to is the trial of Paolo Farsetti and Gabriella Trevisin. I am reading you this statement in order to point out to you that some Italian newspapers, 'Popolo' in particular, persist with the slander and insinuations about some kind of 'exchange'.

I made it clear already on December 17 and now I should like to repeat that never has anyone on the Bulgarian side, no institution, no person, made a direct or indirect proposal or even a hint concerning an eventual exchange of Antonov for Paolo Farsetti and Gabriella Trevisin. These are two entirely different cases, having nothing in common. One of them — the trial now being conducted in Sofia, is a purely espionage affair, while the case in Rome is a political provocation. We cannot barter an innocent man for a spy, as the trial is likely to prove, though I have no excuse to call him so before the court has pronounced a verdict upon him.

I should like to add forthwith: We did not have any 'commodity' ready for exchange because Paolo Farsetti and Gabriella Trevisin were arrested in August of last year — i.e. when no one had even an inkling that Antonov could be arrested. Or, I beg your pardon, if anyone did have an inkling as you are fond of saying, Antonov would have without delay been packed off and returned to Sofia.

Therefore it is out of the question to refer to such a thing and I entreat you to stop the insinuations. Please, do stop them ...

I have in mind 'Popolo' — that it should stop lying to its readers.

V l a d i m i r B a b k i n (TASS): Comrade Traikov, may I ask a question ?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Yes, please.

V l a d i m i r B a b k i n: This far-flung campaign now being mounted against the socialist countries — against Bulgaria and the Soviet Union — it seems to me has yet another target: to lie to world public opinion in connection with the stationing of US missiles in some countries of Western Europe. Information has appeared in the Italian press that the US nuclear weaponry is already being deployed in some of these countries. What would you say in this connection?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: I already commented on this on December 17: We do see a direct connection. Because 1983 is, if I may say so, a crucial year for the stationing of the medium-range Cruise and Pershing missiles in Western Europe. Public opinion in Western Europe should be prepared for the stationing of these missiles. Public opinion in Western Europe should be intimidated with 'the red threat' coming from the East, terrorism coming from the East and so on and so forth so that in such conditions of a 'threat', naturally I put the word in inverted commas, from the East, from the socialist countries, these medium-range missiles could be stationed without much a do, without any protestations in the countries of Western Europe where as is known indignation and protest are mounting.

Mr Rosenthal, please, you have the floor.

B e r t r a n d R o s e n t h a l (France Press): Can you tell me what is Antonov's illness, for one thing and second, whether Bulgaria has asked or is going to ask for permission for a medical examination of Antonov?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: We do not know what Antonov's illness is nor could we know. We published an interview with Dimiter Dimitrov, Director General of the Balkan Airlines in which he shared his personal impression of his 40-minute meeting with Antonov and the words which Antonov said to his chief about the condition of his health. Antonov had said that for some time of late he had severe headaches. Dimiter Dimitrov — the chief of Balkan who knows his employee well and who was struck by the fact that he had lost much weight and had a sallow face, expressed his worry over Antonov's health condition. What I have just re-

ceived and announced here as new information were a few words to the effect that Antonov's health had deteriorated further. What this 'further' means, I cannot tell you for the statement is very brief.

B e r t r a n d R o s e n t h a l: May I ask you whether Bulgaria will demand or has already demanded a medical examination of Antonov?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: We have made no intervention in this respect so far. As is known we have no contacts with the Italian investigating authorities. It is to be surmised that Antonov's defence should take care of this.

What now, shall we settle for bringing our press conference to an end?

V o i c e s: No, no, no. (A n i m a t i o n).

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Colleagues, I beg of you, let us calm down the atmosphere. It is your wish to go on. I am at your disposal. Last time I held out for three and a half hours and I should think I could hold out just as long this time. I wouldn't like anyone to be left with the impression that we had not been willing to answer his questions. Therefore, despite a rather unconventional duration of our meeting, I am prepared to go on for the sake of making it useful, as I said in the very beginning.

Who would like to take the floor?

L y u b o m i r K o r a l o v ('Otechestven Front' newspaper): Late last month I read in the French magazine 'Point' that a mysterious voice phoned from London and threatened judges Martella and Imposimato that if they did not give up investigating 'the Bulgarian trail' they would be killed. The same magazine 'Point' offered yet another sensation — that the key to Antonov's flat had been found on Agca. How would you comment on these 'discoveries'?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: I too read this piece of news, which no western newspaper took up. Obviously our Western colleagues likewise considered it less than serious. By the way 'Point' is known as belonging to the yellow press. I hardly consider it necessary to give further explanations as it is really a very frivolous matter as I have already said. I think what this colleague, I cannot remember his name, wrote, could have been true: he could have picked up the receiver and asked the Paris Directory Inquiries

service for the telephone number of Dr Ilario Martella which they could look up in the Rome telephone directory and again using a public telephone, mind you, he could have dialed the number and in some sort of English threatened Martella. Then he could have sat at his typewriter and put the story to paper with his conscience clear that what he writes is true. An absurd story.

The colleagues from France and Italy know very well that in order to be put through to Rome from London or Paris or anywhere else in Western Europe, and speak to Dr Martella, it is not necessary for an operator to provide you with the connection; it is enough to dial the code of Italy, then of Rome and one is put through to any number. What is more if there had been someone who spoke the threats how could he have done it through an operator? If the conversation had taken place via an operator, then the easiest thing is to check the telephone number which had called the exchange and directed those words of warning to Ilario Martella.

Therefore, the story offered to the readers by the colleague from 'Point' is rather naively fabricated. Obviously he is not very experienced in concocting lies and they can be bought only by very naive people.

The next question, please?

V a l e r y M a k e e v (Soviet television): Comrade Traikov, I would not like to pass over in silence the statement made by a colleague here that the Soviet or other journalists were trying to teach the Italian journalists their trade. This is naive because both their circumstances and conditions of life teach them one thing, and our own teach us something else.

I would like to say the following: let them not be surprised at our identical positions on the 'Antonov case'. This question concerns a socialist country and here we are also representing socialist countries. We are unanimous in our conviction that 'the Antonov case' is fabricated, it is absurd. We are confident that the case will be lost by those who had fabricated it.

Second, we are voicing our opinion. We are journalists who have assembled here to exchange opinions. I, too, am surprised at the fact that when the so called 'Antonov case' was opened of all the Italian press, not a single newspaper thought of starting at the opposite end — instead of accusing Antonov or Bulgaria, to seek ways of unmasking this slanderous version.

A n I t a l i a n j o u r n a l i s t: I should like to go back to Martella's telephone number. As you said it is sufficient to ask from the Roman exchange Martella's number and you can get in touch with him from anywhere in Western Europe. But I should like to explain the following: Martella's telephone number, just like the telephone numbers of other Italian magistrates is not listed in the telephone directories. Moreover when the exchange is called in order to ask to be given the number, the operator answers that this is a private telephone and the caller cannot be put through. Consequently, the person who had dialed from London had obtained that telephone number in some other way, in some other special way.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: And how? Would you be so kind as to ask our French colleague from 'Point' for he is, it seems to me, the only person who knows since it is a product of his imagination. He alone could provide you with an answer. As you well understand such a thing is out of the question.

Any more questions, gentlemen?

As I can see there are no more questions although when I suggested that we call it a day there were quite a few exclamations suggesting that we go on but now as I see ...

Ah, there are a couple of hands raised over there ...

T i t t o S a n s a ('Stampa' newspaper): Mr Traikov, I should like to ask one last question concerning the two Italians under trial in Sofià now. We have come here to cover the proceedings. We have no prejudices and are prepared to write about everything as it is. However, we should like to ask you whether you consider it fair that the accused Farsetti had in six month not been allowed a single hour to breathe fresh air?

B o y a n T r a i k o v: I must contradict you, for your information is wrong. Farsetti has enjoyed his right to walk in the open air. There have been days, for I am acquainted with the matter, when he has been allowed three whole hours of exercise. There have been days when he has been taken for a walk outside the prison. Therefore I am rather surprised by your question and this information you have that as you put it, he had not got a breath of fresh air in the course of six months. This cannot be the case. Perhaps ...

T i t t o S a n s a ('Stampa' newspaper): I apologize Mr Traikov ...

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Perhaps there have been days when for some reason he has not been given time for exercise but this is a different matter. I find it difficult to claim what I said for every single day but I can state that he did go out for walks. This is but one side of the question.

Secondly, gentlemen, I should like you to bear in mind the fact that I am a colleague of yours, a journalist, I am not a lawyer, nor an omniscient person. I cannot enumerate for you on which day of the six months Farsetti has been taken for a walk and on which he has not. You will agree with me that I cannot occupy myself with such minute details.

Yes, the next one please.

A n I t a l i a n j o u r n a l i s t: I should like to ask you whether you as a colleague journalist find it fair that Mr Farsetti (about whom we cannot finally understand whether he did enjoy the right to take exercise or not) was wearing in March, when it was snowing, the same summer suit he had on when he was arrested in August. Throughout that time he had not been provided with adequate clothing.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: As far as I know in Bulgarian prisons the inmates are given prisoner's clothes — the so called striped suits. (L a u g h t e r) So that you can rest assured that he had been provided with such a striped suit which in winter is made of homespun woollen cloth, that is to say, warm clothing. If yesterday he appeared in court in the same summer suit which he wore when he was arrested in August you should blame his relatives and friends who did not bring a warmer suit over for him. There is no practice at the Bulgarian prisons for people who ...

A n I t a l i a n j o u r n a l i s t: No, no, no ...

B o y a n T r a i k o v: There is no practice at the Bulgarian prisons for people who are to be in the dock at a trial to be made a suit to order by the Lada fashion house. (S t o r m y l a u g h t e r).

I v a n Z h e l e v ('Narodna Armiya' newspaper): I should think most of us present in this hall are quite well aware that one political provocation is on the way to go down the drain and therefore a second, reserve variant, is being released. My question is in connection with the second variant: What are the concrete charges brought by the Italian investigating authorities against our compatriot Sergei Antonov in the so called 'plot' to kill Lech

Walesa and do they have any other 'proof' but the belated confessions of the Turkish terrorist Agca?

My second question: How is to be explained that as you just said the health of our compatriot Antonov is getting poorer and his memory is failing while Agca enjoys the best of health and his intellect is razor-sharp.

Thank you.

B o y a n T r a i k o v: Antonov had just recently been informed that another investigation has been started against him on a different charge. We are still at the outset of this new phase if I may say so of the provocation, therefore no information had as yet been leaked to the Italian press as to the essence and wording of the accusation. And as you well understand we have no official information and, judging from the first charge — the attempt on the life of the Pope, we are not likely to be officially informed as to the particulars of the second charge.

How are we to explain Antonov's deteriorating health? I am rather at a loss what to say. The BTA's reference service have provided me with clippings from the Italian press describing cases of treatment of people detained at Italian prisons — persons under investigation or already serving a sentence. I shall spare you the reading of these examples since they portray a horrible picture and I should not like to create a morbid atmosphere at our meeting.

Are there any other questions?

I propose that we hear our colleague Graziano Motta who has asked for the floor and then bring our press conference to an end.

G r a z i a n o M o t t a (ANSA): I should like to address one question to Mr Traikov if he will allow me.

I speak on behalf of all my colleagues because we have great difficulties in obtaining telephone connections with Italy. Especially on such a day as today we are bound to have a lot of difficulties. We would like to ask you to ensure that the Sofia Central Telephone Exchange do its best to assist us not only today when the lines are bound to be extremely busy but also during the next days. To our regret, we have not been receiving such assistance.

Thank you!

B o y a n T r a i k o v: I take it upon myself to convey your request to the Sofia Central Telephone Exchange. At this Palace of Culture though, there is a press centre at which very good, re-

gular and prompt telephone and telex connections with the whole world are available.

By the way, gentlemen, here is what I have to tell you on that question. Not everything can run smoothly in a country — in some countries it is the jurisdiction that is faulty, in others — the telephones. (S t o r m y l a u g h t e r) This is life and what can we do about it? (L a u g h t e r p e r s i s t s)

Gentlemen, I should like to thank you for having attended this meeting. Without venturing to assess it I should think it has allowed us to exchange ideas, opinions, information on the familiar subject which as I already said is called 'the Antonov case' by some and which I personally call the subversion of the neo-crusaders ... I hope it has been a fruitful meeting and it will elicit a broad reaction in publications in the press and radio and TV broadcasts.

I appeal once again to our colleagues of all countries — both the Bulgarian and the foreign ones — that we all remain true to our journalistic duty and ethics — to provide objective information. Moreover as we all are — and have here made such declarations — interested in reaching the truth, let us spare no effort today or in the future throughout the developments in Rome — I have in mind the 'Antonov case' — in order to make our contribution to reaching the truth, to ensure the most favourable outcome of the affair so that the traditionally good friendly relations of cooperation between Bulgaria and Italy can be restored.

So that Europe can once again enjoy that fair and wonderful climate which we enjoyed several years ago when the Helsinki Declaration — the Final Act of Helsinki was signed at the white-stone Finlandia Palace and all European nations hailed detente, security and peace in Europe.

Thank you for your attention and for your participation.
(A p p l a u s e)

(Verbatim report)

IN DEFENCE OF AN INNOCENT MAN

Immediate Measures Demanded for the Medical Treatment of Antonov

Sofia, March 11 (BTA). Serious alarm and concern was expressed in an Address of the Union of Scientific Medical Societies in Bulgaria to the World Health Organization at the reports about a sharp deterioration of the state of health of the Bulgarian citizen Sergei Antonov, against whom unwarranted charges have been made of complicity in the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II.

‘Almost four months have elapsed since the arrest of Sergei Antonov and we learn that the condition of his health is exceptionally grave,’ the Address reads in part. ‘Besides, it is evident from his external appearance and from his complaints that there are physical and mental morbid symptoms.’

It is pointed out in the Address that Antonov’s relatives who have visited him in prison, have been seriously worried about his grave physical state — general bodily weakness. They have been alarmed by the drastic change in his mental condition, his failing memory and the complaints of alien thoughts being imposed in his mind, his slow and difficult speech etc.

These symptoms give us reason to suspect that attempts are possibly being made to influence the physical and mental state of Sergei Antonov resorting to impermissible methods and means, the Address points out.

Bringing to the notice of the World Health Organization their serious concern over the deterioration of the health of Sergei Antonov — a perfectly healthy young man until his illegal arrest, the Union of Scientific Medical Societies in Bulgaria is insistently asking this humane organization to intercede with the Italian authorities for taking immediate qualified steps for the medical treatment of Sergei Antonov.

A Gross Violation of Criminal Law

Sofia, March 12 (BTA). It has been stated in a Declaration issued by the Union of Lawyers in Bulgaria, in connection with the illegal detention of the Bulgarian citizen Sergei Antonov, that the reports published in the Italian and the world press testify to the fact that the accusations levelled against Antonov of complicity in the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II are based solely on the evidence of the assailant Mehmet Ali Agca, evidence which has not only not been confirmed but has been categorically refuted in the course of the investigation, which has been going on for more than three months. Our fears that this is a case of the prosecution of an innocent man, expressed in the previous declaration of the Union of Lawyers in Bulgaria, have been confirmed. Sergei Antonov is the victim of a base slander, which at the same time is being used for a deliberate and unscrupulous smear campaign against the People's Republic of Bulgaria.

Further on in the Declaration it is stressed that to keep in prison an innocent and sick man is a violation of basic human rights. Concern has been expressed over the fact that Antonov's health is deteriorating in prison and also the apprehension that impermissible means and methods of influence upon him are being used.

The Union of Lawyers in Bulgaria calls upon all lawyers in the world and the Italian lawyers in the first place, to raise their voice in protest against this gross violation of the classical principles of criminal law and legal proceedings and through the force of public opinion to contribute to the release of Sergei Antonov.

JUDGE PALERMO IN BULGARIA

Carlo Palermo: Thank You for Your Cooperation

Sofia, March 14 (BTA). Today the Italian investigating magistrate Carlo Palermo expressed his thanks for the cooperation and assistance which he had received from the Bulgarian investigating authorities.

Carlo Palermo was holding an inquiry into the discovery in the Italian town of Trento of a case of international smuggling of arms and narcotics.

He arrived in Bulgaria on March 5 to interrogate the Turkish citizen Bekir Celenk in connection with the inquiry.

The Italian investigating magistrate said before Bulgarian and Italian journalists that his visit to Bulgaria was instrumental in the establishment of the first direct contact between Bulgarian and Italian investigating authorities, a contact which went beyond the limits of a mere interrogation.

Palermo declared that such good cooperation had not been achieved even with countries with which Italy had signed legal conventions.

The Italian investigating magistrate informed the journalists that he had been given the opportunity to interrogate the Turkish citizen Bekir Celenk directly and according to the Italian laws — an unprecedented case in international practice, though no accusation has been formulated against Bekir Celenk in Bulgaria. He stressed that Italy cannot have any claims whatsoever on Bulgaria to arrest Bekir Celenk.

Carlo Palermo said that he had been absolutely free in interrogating Celenk without any restrictions and that the entire interrogation had been recorded on magnetic tape and on video tape. He was also given copies of the original recording which according to Palermo provides the maximum guarantee for the inquiry he is conducting.

He declared that he had informed the Bulgarian competent authorities about the results of the inquiry he was holding.

Extending once again his thanks for the assistance and the co-operation of the Bulgarian investigating authorities he declared that he expected good results from this cooperation in the future, too.

Gratification with Fruitful Cooperation

Sofia, March 15 (BTA). A Protocol was signed here today about the results of the visit to Bulgaria of the Italian investigating magistrate Carlo Palermo.

It is stated in the Protocol that on the basis of the proposal of the Minister of Justice of Bulgaria addressed to the Minister of Justice of Italy, about rendering assistance to the Italian investigating authorities in the inquiry into the illegal traffic of weapons and narcotics, Dr Carlo Palermo, investigating magistrate in the court of law in the town of Trento, Italy, and Mr Cristoforo la Corte, chief commissioner of the State Police of Italy — the department for struggle against narcotic drugs at the Central Board of Directors of the criminal department, were in Sofia from March 5 to 15, 1983. They had many working meetings with representatives of the judicial authorities and the organs of the people's militia in Bulgaria.

The objective of these meetings was first of all the fulfilment of the court order for interrogation by Dr Palermo, with the assistance of Dr La Corte, of the Turkish citizen Bekir Celenk, who is under the control of the Bulgarian authorities. The Bulgarian side made an audio-video magnetic tape recordings which were delivered to Dr Carlo Palermo together with the minutes of the interrogation.

The fulfilment of the court order was permitted by the Office of the Prosecutor General of Bulgaria, even though no treaty of legal assistance has been signed between Bulgaria and Italy.

The difficulties in fulfilling the court order were overcome thanks to the concrete and broad readiness on the part of the Bulgarian judicial authorities for cooperation.

The interrogation of Bekir Celenk was held directly by Dr Palermo in accordance with the rules of Italian procedure.

Moreover the Bulgarian judicial authorities made available to Dr Palermo a copy of the documents which are useful for the inquiry he is conducting.

On this occasion, contacts have been established for the first time between the relevant Bulgarian and Italian authorities, which led to a mutual exchange of information and facts and provided prerequisites for continuing this cooperation in the future.

Particularly useful were the visit to the Bulgarian frontier check point of Kalotina at the Bulgarian-Yugoslav frontier and the meetings with representatives of the Bulgarian frontier and customs authorities.

After completing the work, the two sides expressed their satisfaction with the results achieved, particularly having in mind the difficulties connected with the holding of an inquiry affecting more than one country. They expressed the conviction that the cooperation in the struggle against the traffic of narcotics and arms and against terrorism will be conducive to the improvement of inter-state relations and to the promotion of international understanding.

In this context wishes were expressed for establishing similar and closer contacts in the future too.

The two sides stressed that the juridical measures taken in Bulgaria have many positive elements which will be useful for the further inquiry in Italy and in Bulgaria.

Dr Palermo and Dr La Corte thanked the Bulgarian authorities and their colleagues for the assistance rendered to them, stressing that during the meetings and the fulfilment of the court order they had manifested great readiness, a high professional standard and great competence in matters of juridical procedure.

INJUSTICE CONTINUES

The Court Rejects the Petition for the Release of Antonov

Rome, March 24 (UPI). The Rome 'Court of Freedom' today rejected the petition for a temporary release of the Bulgarian employee who has been in prison since November 25, 1982, accused of complicity in the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II in 1981.

The court which is entitled to pass judgement on petitions for temporary release, rejected the petition of the counsels for the defence of Sergei Antonov, who insisted on his being released for lack of evidence against him.

This is the third petition of Antonov's Italian defence that has been rejected.

According to sources close to the court the charges brought up by Mehmet Ali Agca were considered by the court sufficient ground for the decision that Antonov should remain in prison.

At Variance with Justice and Human Rights

Sofia, March 24 (BTA political observer Krassimir Droumev). Exactly four months after the arrest of Sergei Antonov on absolutely unfounded charges of complicity in the attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II, the Italian 'Court of Freedom' rejected the petition for the release of the Bulgarian national. The petition had been drawn up by S. Antonov's lawyers who motivated their action with the lack of any proof whatsoever of his guilt.

It is for the third time that the Italian court rejects such a petition and it is for the third time that 'sources close to the court' as they are referred to by the western news agencies, announce that the accusations of the professional assassin and ultra-right terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca had been considered sufficient ground for keeping Antonov behind bars.

The so called 'Court of Freedom' was set up in comparatively recent times. It is referred to as an independent institution which is entitled to defend justice and the human rights. Its attitude to the 'Antonov Case' has to a great extent formed the reputation of this young institution and, regrettably, it would be an exaggeration to state that its name is in harmony with legal regulations and human morals. Why?

Because it is puzzling indeed that a 'confession' as was the evidence given by Agca which is not only utterly contradictory but has been repeatedly unmasked as false and which was disproved by the facts adduced by prestigious newspapers in the West and by outstanding jurists and politicians should tip the scales used by this court in its favour. It is well known that Agca began to make 'confessions' after he had meetings in prison with representatives of the Italian secret services.

On the other pan of the scales is the evidence given by citizens who have never violated law and who categorically stated that Antonov did not know Agca and that on the day when the attempt on the Pope's life was made, Antonov was in his office

and not in St Peter's Square. The allegation of the terrorist about a conference which took place on May 10, 1981 in Antonov's home in the presence of his wife, who was in Sofia at that time, was denounced as a base lie. The public not only in Bulgaria but abroad, too knows other irrefutable proofs of the innocence of Antonov, and of the fact that Bulgaria has nothing to do with the criminal attempt on the life of the Pope.

Judge Martella who is conducting the investigation received detailed answers to the questions which he sent to the Bulgarian judicial authorities. Maybe he still needs further information? But unlike his colleague Palermo who was holding another investigation, he did not avail himself of the invitation to visit this country. On the other hand the CIA has joined in the search for 'proofs' of the Bulgarian participation in the attempt.

Putting the truth and the lie on each scale we cannot remain impartial when the balance is tipped in favour of the lie as is now the case in Rome. Can we assume that the 'Court of Freedom' is acting according to its conscience? If the question was a merely juridical one it would have released Antonov long ago. Obviously, in spite of its name the 'Court of Freedom' is not free, a pressure is exerted on it to continue the political provocation against the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the other socialist countries. The court makes its reputation and also its otherwise beautiful name subservient to those whose policy is aimed at the deterioration of international relations, at sowing distrust and hatred among the peoples.

The Accusations Collapse Again

A press conference at the Bulgarian Embassy in Rome

Rome, March 30 (BTA correspondent Hristo Petrov). The detention of Sergei Antonov for four months now is an illegal, arbitrary and unjustified act aimed at damaging the traditionally good relations between Bulgaria and Italy and at defaming Bulgaria in the eyes of the world public opinion. This act, however, is likewise after other aims of a long-term effect. The assertions that the socialist countries and Bulgaria supposedly guide international terrorism so as to destabilize the NATO countries, are nothing but a propaganda clamour which is being raised in order to create the appropriate atmosphere that would be conducive to the deployment of the American missiles in Western Europe and to driving a wedge in the movement of the progressive forces fighting for peace and detente.

These were the words with which the charge d'affaires of the Bulgarian Embassy in Italy, Lyudmil Popov, opened the press conference yesterday which was attended by 50 Italian and foreign journalists.

Antonov's counsel for the defence, the lawyers Guiseppe Consolo and Adolfo Larussa categorically rejected one of the main points of support of the investigation — the assertions of the terrorist Agca that Sergei Antonov's daughter and wife were present at the conference on May 10, 1981, where Pope John Paul II's assassination was allegedly prepared. Since the investigators themselves took no pains to check on the authenticity of Agca's 'testimony', Antonov's defence counsel produced documents certified by the Italian Embassy in Sofia from which it is clear that Antonov's wife left Italy on May 8 the same year and that on the same date she had checked in at a motel in Yugoslavia, while his daughter had not left Bulgaria during that period.

The lawyers Consolo and Larussa told the press conference that they were in possession of many other pieces of evidence showing that Agca had told lies and that they would not yet pro-

duce these pieces of evidence so as not to make it easier for those who help the Turkish assailant.

The statements made by the Italian psychiatrists Professor di Vincentis and Professor de Sando, and by the Bulgarian Professor Ivan Temkov, who examined Sergei Antonov, caused quite a stir. Professor Tenkov told of his impressions and of the impressions of his Italian colleagues: 'Antonov is showing signs of a continuing crisis reaction which is the result of the special conditions he has been placed in and of the adverse effect of the circulating attitudes and the accusations threatening his freedom. He is showing signs of depression, dejection, low spirits and has the feeling that aggressive schemes are being deliberately hatched against him. The psychological condition Antonov is now in from the viewpoint of its development, is a cause of alarm and there is an apprehension of its being further deteriorated'.

Asked by a West German journalist if the symptoms detected during Antonov's examination can be interpreted as reactions of a guilty man, Professor di Vincentis answered that he categorically opposed such an interpretation.

At the press conference Lyudmil Popov confirmed the readiness of the Bulgarian side to cooperate with the Italian authorities in establishing the complete truth and expressed hope that the representatives of the mass media would contribute to the triumph of justice.

The reports about the press conference carried by the Italian press today indicate three approaches of their authors: an objective assessment of the importance of the evidence produced, presentation of the documented facts without commentaries and in some cases a desire to belittle them.

Writes the 'Paese sera' newspaper: 'An important part of Ali Agca's story has thus collapsed, a story the investigating magistrates have so far been setting great store by. This applies not only to them. The "court of freedom" which a few days ago again refused to release Antonov, pointed out in the motif of its ruling a circumstance (the participation of Rossitsa Antonova in some sort of a conference that was to prepare the assassination of the Pontiff) on which the confidence in Agca's testimony was based. The investigating magistrates used to say that if he had made mistakes about some things, about others he had presented true testimony, particularly about the presence of Rossitsa at the conference on

May 10, a particular nobody had succeeded in refuting. What will happen now that such a disclaimer is available, an indisputable one at that?'

'The lawyers Guiseppe Consolo and Adolfo Larussa,' the 'Repubblica' newspaper writes, 'showed on television for all the world to see some documents which, as was pointed out also refute the disclosures made by the Turkish assassin about the alleged involvement of Sergei Antonov in the attempted assassination of the Pope.'

'The two lawyers,' 'Il Messaggero' writes, 'openly said that they were convinced of Antonov's innocence. This morning they are going to submit the evidence they have to Judge Ilario Martella to whom they will appeal once again for Antonov's release.'

Without commenting on the facts presented at the press conference, the 'Tempo', 'Giornale' and 'Popolo' newspapers describe the documents submitted and quote the opinions of psychiatrists about Antonov's condition.

Who Bears the Responsibility?

March 31, 1983 (the 'Otechestven Front' newspaper). The 'Court of Freedom' in Rome rejected for the second time the petition made by the defence counsel of the Bulgarian citizen Sergei Antonov for his release for lack of evidence to prove his involvement in the assassination attempt against the Pope.

The bourgeois press in Italy reports that the main reason for the decision against the release of Sergei Antonov is solely the assertion of the assassin Ali Agca, mostly the suspicious description of Antonov's dwelling in Rome. The fallacious nature of this evidence and the deadlock the investigation has come to can also be seen from the nervousness of Washington and even by the slanderous anti-Bulgarian article which appeared in 'The New York Times' newspaper a few days ago and by the fact that this provocation campaign has also been joined by the notorious Zbigniew Brzezinski. What is more, according to reports beamed by the American television company NBC three prominent CIA emissaries in Italy are under investigation for having taken the liberty of expressing doubt about the existence of a 'Bulgarian' connection in the attempted assassination of the Pope.

No representative of the Italian judicial organs speaks now of when will at last the investigation into Antonov's alleged involvement in the attempted assassination of the Pontiff be over and when will they at last have the courage to admit that an innocent man has been detained who must be released as soon as possible. The assertions of 'The New York Times' that the investigating magistrate Martella might be able to succeed in finding his bearings in the mountain of information and then refer the case to the prosecutor sound rather alarming. There remains the open question as to what this fog-enveloped mountain of fabrications invented by the criminal Agca is and can a monstrous accusation of this kind be built on such a suspicious basis.

The investigating authorities in Rome have been concealing themselves behind the high-flown phrases of seeking the 'truth'. But where is this truth being sought and in what manner? It is sought by giving credence only to the criminal Agca and by rejecting all the evidence which flatly disproves his inventions! The investigating magistrate Ilario Martella ignored the proposals of the Bulgarian judicial authorities of cooperation in seeking the truth. Why did Mr Martella not avail himself of the invitation to visit Bulgaria and check on Agca's groundless accusations on the spot? No answer can be found to this logical question.

The visit of the examining magistrate Carlo Palermo to Sofia is indicative of the opportunities for a genuine and useful cooperation between the Bulgarian and Italian judicial organs. He was given every assistance in the fulfilment of his mission. Let us recall the conclusion in this connection of the 'Repubblica' newspaper: 'In Sofia Carlo Palermo wrote out 200 pages of protocols of examinations'. 'I am very pleased and the balance-sheet is undoubtedly positive', he said. In Bulgaria the Italian judge was also able to exchange information with the local judicial authorities. 'I was given a tremendous amount of help,' he said with a smile. We quote the 'Repubblica' newspaper in order to emphasize once again that the Italian public acknowledges that there are possibilities for seeking out the truth regardless of the fact that there is no agreement on legal assistance between Bulgaria and Italy. The People's Republic of Bulgaria has given and is willing to give earnest assistance to combatting crime on an international scale.

What was done for judge Palermo in Bulgaria can be likewise done for his colleague Martella. It has been officially and unofficially hinted that the Bulgarian authorities should have presented facts so as to refute the accusation made against Antonov. For one thing, it has not been officially announced so far as to what evidence there is to accuse him, evidence which has to be refuted. Secondly, the classical principle of criminal jurisdiction is that it is not the accused who must prove his innocence, but that it is the duty of the accuser to present facts of his guilt. So that if there are any facts which can be collected in Bulgaria, Mr Martella can avail himself of the invitation extended to him, come to Bulgaria and question the necessary witnesses.

The sooner this is done, the better. For the endless detention of Antonov, whose health is steadily deteriorating as a result of

his four months' imprisonment and of the investigation, coupled with the mounting pressure that is being brought to bear upon him, and of the compelling desire of certain quarters to extract confession about facts which do not exist at all, cannot be justified in any way.

Some Italian journalists have been hinting that under Italian law, the investigation may even be dragged on for several years. In this context it is well worth quoting the Italian weekly 'Sette Giorni', appearing in Catania, which wrote that 'the public is convinced, as we are, that the two Rome investigators will bring the Bulgarian Sergei Antonov to court. And perhaps after he had spent several years in prison, the court, faced with accusations which do not hold water and are not based on facts, will have to release him for lack of evidence. On the other hand, the investigators will not be held responsible for a miscarriage of justice, protected as they are by their judicial power which absolves them of any responsibility in contravention of Article 3 of the Constitution which states that 'all citizens shall enjoy equal social dignity and shall be equal before the law'. The judge, therefore, must expiate his errors.' the 'Sette Giorni' writes in conclusion.

This view can be hardly objected to by anyone. But let us pick up the thread. The unwarranted procrastination of the investigation, the refusal to free the Bulgarian citizen Sergei Antonov runs counter to the meaning of the Italian Constitution and the standards of ethics, to the elementary requirement of protecting the right of 'habeas corpus'. Not only in Italy but at international forums too, prominent Italian political figures speak out all too enthusiastically in favour of protecting civil and human rights. Is Antonov's unjustified detention not a gross violation of these lofty principles?

Finally, let us dwell on the crux of the matter — who bears the responsibility for the unending protraction of the investigation and for the crying injustice in respect of Sergei Antonov? In this connection it is stressed in the Italian capital that the judicial authorities are supposedly independent of anyone and that it is only they that can take a decision on the progress of the inquiry. But is there any country where legal control is not exercised over the activity of justice? Here we are faced with a monstrous plot aimed at discrediting a country which enjoys an international pre-

stige as socialist Bulgaria a peace-loving people which is friendly towards Italy? Consequently, the attitude towards the so-called 'Antonov case' goes far beyond the responsibility of the judicial authorities. For it is a question of standing for justice, for the release of an innocent man, for thwarting a political subversion. No politician or statesman should remain indifferent to an arbitrary judicial act which as well as against its immediate victim, Antonov, is also directed at aggravating relations between Bulgaria and Italy, at discrediting the policy of peaceful coexistence, at stoking up tension in our world threatened as it is by a nuclear conflict.

NENCHO HRANOV
a BTA political observer

DELIBERATE ILL INTENTIONS

An Article in *The New York Times*

New York, March 23 (BTA). 'The New York Times' newspaper today publishes an article by Nicholas Gage. The author writes that after a two-month-long inquiry, carried out by 'The New York Times' in seven countries, into the alleged plot to kill Pope John Paul II, information has been gathered that supports the testimony given by the Turkish assassin Agca that he was acting at the behest of Bulgarian intelligence agents.

The evidence, though not conclusive, Gage writes, was given by the 48-year-old Bulgarian defector Yordan Mantarov. Yordan Mantarov was deputy commercial attache at the Bulgarian Embassy in Paris from 1979 to the summer of 1981, when he asked for political asylum in France. His defection to France has been kept so quiet by the French Internal Counterespionage Service that the French only recently told the US Central Intelligence Agency about it.

Yordan Mantarov told French intelligence agents that the plot to kill the Pope was devised by the KGB, the Soviet intelligence agency, and by the Bulgarian secret services. According to Mantarov, Nicholas Gage writes, the plan was drawn up because the two agencies believed that the Pope was the keystone of a US effort to subvert the Polish government and move it away from the communist bloc.

Mantarov's account, according to French intelligence sources, represents the first report from a Bulgarian defector who was in an official position at the time of the shooting. It is not known whether French intelligence officials have told the Italian authorities about Mantarov's discoveries, but it appears unlikely because they are known to be protective of the information they collect. None of the Italian officials interviewed, including the investigating magistrate, Ilario Martella, gave any hint that they knew of the new defector, Nicholas Gage writes.

According to French intelligence sources, the articles notes,

Mantarov has told his debriefers that he was a close friend of a high-ranking official in the counterintelligence division of the Bulgarian state security, a certain Dimiter Savov, who, Mantarov said, told him that in 1979 the KGB came to believe that the election of Karol Wojtyla as pope the previous year was engineered by Zbigniew Brzezinski. His objective was that the United States profit the growing unrest in Poland and that Poland cut off its ties with Moscow. It is not clear on what basis the KGB might have reached such a belief, 'The New York Times' writes.

The article further notes that according to Mantarov, the reaction of the Soviet authorities was that the Pope should be eliminated and that this mission was entrusted to the Bulgarian security organs. Savov had been informed in person about the plot to assassinate the Pope. Nicholas Gage writes that another defector from Bulgaria, Svrudlev, a former colonel, who now lives in FRG is reported to have said that he knew a person by the name of Dimiter Savov from the security services.

Nicholas Gage writes that 'while the information Mantarov has provided is based on what a third party, Savov told him, and is therefore hearsay evidence, French intelligence agents who have questioned him say they believe the account because other information he had told them he learned from Savov has checked out. They would not offer examples'.

The author of the article goes on to add that Mantarov quoted Savov as saying Agca was chosen as the assassin because he was known throughout the world as a rightist and had no links to any communist country.

Agca was supposed to be killed in St Peter's Square after assassinating the Pope, according to the Mantarov account.

The investigation by 'The New York Times' has established that among the additional evidence the investigating Judge Martella is in possession of are witnesses, documents and testimony.

The author of the article then dwells on the evidence provided by the former trade union official Luigi Scricciolo who is now being investigated in connection with the charges of involvement with the Bulgarian security organs.

Nicholas Gage also writes in his article about the new accusations levelled at Antonov and Bulgaria of engineering a plot to kill Lech Walesa. He gives a detailed description of the testimony given by the Turk.

Nicholas Gage further writes about the statements by another defector from Bulgaria, Velichko Peichev, an acquaintance of Antonov's, who went into the prison to confront the Bulgarian citizen Antonov. He later said that Antonov was extremely nervous. The correspondent of 'The New York Times' also dwells on Antonov's alibi established by seven witnesses of the defence counsel and disregarded by investigating Judge Martella. 'Although not all of Agca's statements have proven correct, those relating to the planning of the assassination and the three Bulgarians who purportedly helped him have consistently held up, according to the Italian authorities,' Nicholas Gage writes.

The American journalist reports on a number of facts about the Turkish citizen Bekir Celenk who is in Sofia and has been placed under the control of the Bulgarian authorities.

Another man who, according to the Italians, could prove the Bulgarian involvement is Sergei Antonov, Nicholas Gage notes. He is still in prison and persistently claims that he is innocent. But his longtime acquaintance Peichev thinks that Antonov is thinking about his future while he is in prison alone, and his wife is in Bulgaria and that he may decide that his life is in danger and that this danger comes from his own compatriots. Therefore, he may finally decide that the only way to save his life is to cooperate with the Italian police ... Although there is a question of whether Celenk or Antonov will ever confess, the Italian magistrate Martella, who has been unravelling the tangled skein of evidence ... seems confident that he can sort through the mass of information still to be checked 'within this year' and then make his recommendation to the prosecutor, writes Nicholas Gage in conclusion.

The Latest Bubble

Sofia, March 27 (BTA political observer Nencho Hranov). — After a brief period of calm, the Western imperialist centres began fuelling anew the loud campaign of the alleged Bulgarian involvement in the assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II. Frustrated by their own disability to produce any convincing proofs, however slight they might be, of the 'guilt' of the Bulgarian Airlines official Sergei Antonov, who is now arbitrarily held under arrest, the true instigators of this political subversion — the US secret services, have decided this time to contribute more directly to the political complot.

Their accomplice became the 'heavy artillery' of the conservative press in the States — the 'New York Times', which under the conspicuous heading 'The Attack on the Pope: New Link to Bulgaria' offered the 'sensational discoveries' of the newspaper's Paris correspondent Nicholas Gage as a criminal novel with sequels, circulated now by all Western news agencies and big bourgeois newspapers.

The key figure in the 'discoveries' of the American journalist is a mysterious Bulgarian diplomat, 'deputy commercial attache' in Paris Yordan Mantarov, a defector to France. We learn that this person had long since confessed to the French secret services that he knew from a high-ranking officer of the Bulgarian State Security that the 'KGB and the Bulgarian intelligence' had planned the Pope's assassination back in 1979. Mantarov claimed to have understood from the same source that the tool was to be the Turkish right extremist Ali Agca.

And conclusions impose themselves — the badly needed witness to confirm Antonov's guilt and Bulgaria's 'involvement' is at last found.

If the permanent correspondent of the 'New York Times' in Paris had not had the opportunity during his two-month investi-

gation to leaf through the list of diplomats accredited to Paris, the respective authorities at least could have helped him ascertain that this Yordan Mantarov had never been a deputy commercial attache at the Bulgarian Embassy. So the impressive title of a Bulgarian diplomat (to make all this seem more plausible) has nothing to do with Mantarov and his occupation in the past. What is the truth, then? Mantarov had been a mechanic maintaining the farm machinery sold by the Agromachinainpex foreign trade organization, and later, an employee of the Bulgarian-French firm Sofbim. In this capacity of his he committed financial offences which led to his summoning back to Bulgaria. So he preferred to remain in France and no wonder that he readily placed himself at the disposal of foreign intelligence services, and, in order to raise his price, concocted a number of fables about 'first-hand' information on the planned assassination of the Pope.

Thus Mantarov proves to be of the same stock of criminals exploited by the CIA, as the notorious 'expert on the Bulgarian State Security' Syrudlev and the American agent of Radio Free Europe Velichko Peichev, who were made TV stars and ever-willing writers of anti-Bulgarian interviews. They all are people without scruples, who would for a handful of silver pieces prove that even Kennedy's murder was the work of the Bulgarian secret services.

But let us see how void of logic and absurd the slanders spread by the 'New York Times' of late are. We would like to ask the logical question: Which secret service, contemplating an action of the scope of the assassination of the Pope would make its top secret plans known to a tractor mechanic working abroad? Which top officer of an intelligence service will so readily elaborate on the motives and the plan, and would even give the name of the future assassin? Such a story can only be the product of the rather poor imagination of the American journalist, of half-baked stories designed for absolutely naive audience.

But let us go on. It is not very clear from the writings when exactly Mantarov 'sang his song to the French security services' (Western journalese). If this had happened before he defected in order to avoid being held responsible for his crimes (July 1981), or shortly before the assault on the Pope, it means that he had already been recruited as a secret agent by the French intelligence.

And if he had told in Paris about the 'plan' to kill the Pope before Agca made his attempt, why did the French intelligence officers not inform their Italian colleagues or the Vatican about the plan to kill the Pope?

For even Western secret services experts, who are not too strict about juridical regulations, must know the rule that he who learns of a premeditated crime and keeps that knowledge to himself, is considered an accomplice to the perpetrator. Therefore, the French intelligence has also a responsibility to bear, and not simply a moral or political one, but legal, too.

And should the disclosures of the 'New York Times' not be an impetus for action on the part of the so dilligent investigating magistrate Martella who does not think twice before signing arrest warrants of foreign citizens (of the socialist countries, of course). And if Mantarov knew of the crime about to be perpetrated, and had not informed about it so as to prevent it, is he not an accomplice of Agca too, and should he not be held responsible not only under the French, but under the Italian Penal Code, too? Are we to expect that Mantarov will be sent over by the French authorities to the Rome investigating bodies? And, if not, should not the fabrications of the 'New York Times' be officially disproved?

Of course, no one is so naive as to expect such a turnabout. The author of the 'New York Times' fabrications and those who stand behind him, need Mantarov just as a kind of 'convincing source' of slanderous allegations to fuel up the dying-out anti-Bulgarian campaign in connection with the so-called 'Antonov case'. Other nurse children of the CIA from various nationalities can also become witnesses of the Mantarov type, but they would be as inconvincing and pitiful as the chief supplier of 'incriminating material' — the assailant Agca. For this fully concocted version of the 'Bulgarian trail' in St Peter's Square exists simply in the script of its authors. Because it has one sole aim — to blacken the image of socialist Bulgaria, to poison international climate, to serve the purposes of the neo-crusade against world socialism so loudly launched by President Reagan.

Who Will Get the Big Medal?

March 30, 1983 (The 'Otechestven Front' newspaper). Who will get the big medal for a criminal political subversion? Fresh forces have joined the rally of the anti-Bulgarian and anti-socialist campaign. Having lost patience with the slow and entangled system of the Italian investigation in connection with the assassination attempt against the Pope, the CIA decided to step in and inflict a direct blow. President Reagan and his close aides realized that the investigation into the accusations against the Bulgarian citizen Sergei Antonov is entering into a period of a difficult crisis and that the links in the chain of the large-scale anti-socialist action are breaking one after another. He, therefore, irritatedly instructed the CIA to take up openly the task of salvaging the anti-communist conspiracy agonizing under the blows of the facts.

And so the CIA came out from behind the scenes from where it had so far been dictating ideas and variants and addressed itself to the business in hand with a vengeance. It was necessary to find something new, something sensational — anti-Bulgarian. That was no easy task for this something new had to sound truthful considering all the failures so far. Mobilizing a group of CIA operatives that also include journalists, the CIA let the world know through the correspondent of the 'New York Times' in Paris, Nicholas Gage of an astonishingly insignificant piece of news.

The Bulgarian involvement in the preparation for the assassination of the Pope had been proved by ... a Bulgarian immigrant. An overwhelming piece of evidence, 'indeed'! Was it really necessary to wait for such a long time in order to learn of such a disclosure? From the very first weeks the secret services both in Italy and in the United States could have turned to any traitor-immigrant and get such assurances. It is not only Mantarov who is willing to have his reputation with those services boosted. Many like him would like to distinguish themselves by telling a story

padding it out with the respective political analysis that would fit the affair, without presenting a single fact.

The 'sensational' disclosure made by the American journalist arouses suspicion for even the initial data presented by him is untrue. Mantarov had never been a deputy trade attache but an ordinary mechanic at the office of the Bulgarian enterprise Agromachinaimpex. Nor was he a highly placed person holding a responsible post. Quite the reverse. He was a third-rank employee in every respect. The evidence he produced, as we have already pointed out, were of a political nature. All the bourgeois mass media resorted to speculation of this kind in order to explain 'the motives' of the Bulgarian services for planning the assassination of the Pope. Mantarov concocts his fables in the same way. The Pope, as he put it, was not to the liking of the Bulgarian and Soviet agencies because he had helped those forces who sought to break Poland away from the Soviet bloc.

Just imagine what a bloodshed would have had to be organized by the Bulgarian special services in order to remove all influential persons who sought and are still seeking to achieve this aim.

Correspondent Nicholas Gage wrote that he had received that information from a French intelligence source. Here again we come up against this extremely curious method of supplying information, specific for the western press: the 'leak' of information which is supposed to be classified.

But if Mr Mantarov has truly decided to consolidate his positions of a defector with a fable like this, why then did the French sources not pass that information on to the Italian investigators? The 'New York Times' explained that the French intelligence services 'are known to be protective of the information they collect'. It is quite obvious, however, that it had quite submissively shared it with the American agent, that is, with the correspondent of the 'New York Times'.

So the Bulgarians were, as Mantarov put it, displeased with the Pope already at the time of his election as Pontiff in 1978. They waited for a certain Agca to escape from prison in order to assign to him the delicate task of killing the Pope. They confided in Agca because he was a pronounced rightist extremist and so no one would look for his relationship with communists. But the question arises: if he were caught, would he keep mum about his ideological

enemies, the communists? Those who are handling Ali Agca and who are looking for his accomplices in the same way as one goes to a goat for wool have been turning a deaf ear from the very beginning to this utter absurdity.

The American Central Intelligence Agency is in a hurry to help along the Italian investigators who have come to a deadlock. After the series of variants which were supplied to Agca but collapsed one after another, his inspiration seems to have run dry and his statements are now accepted by the public opinion with irony and boredom.

The bourgeois press itself, so 'trustful' at the beginning, has become openly suspicious. It has discredited itself by showing overzeal, which has begun to look like an information kitsch. One way or another, the chance seized upon of abusing Bulgaria, and through it, socialism and its policy, was not to be missed. For this reason a new, hastily cooked up story, again with anti-Polish implications, was set afoot on the ideological propaganda market — a plan to kill Lech Walesa.

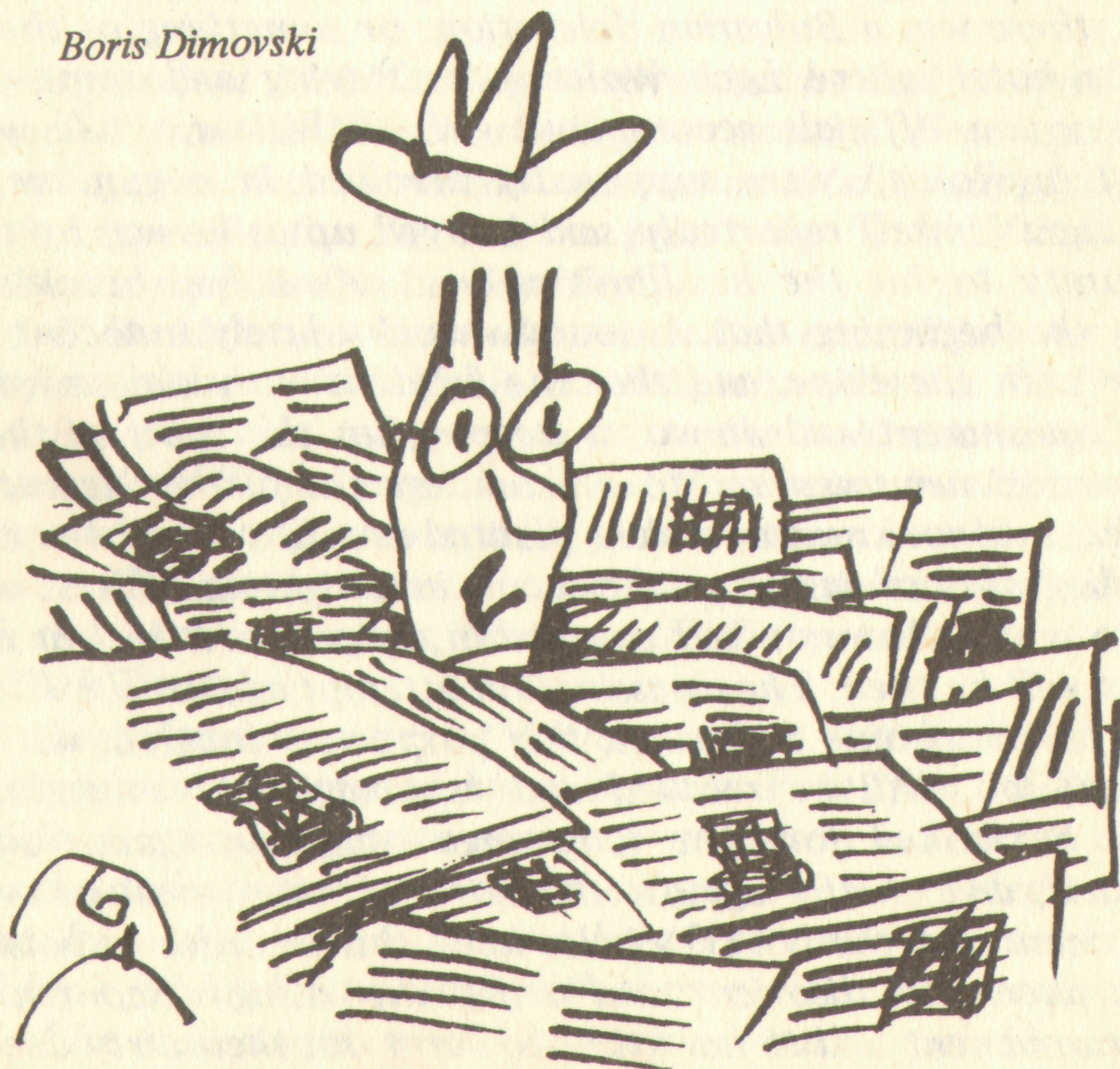
The evidence in this case was even more pitiful. According to it, there was a Bulgarian delegation, or something of the kind, at the hotel where Lech Walesa was staying and some of the trade union officials accompanying Lech Walesa, while walking about in Rome, 'were supposedly involved in a gun incident', as Walesa himself reportedly said buoyed up as he was by the opportunity to hit the headlines again ... As it had become clear from the beginning that Antonov was absolutely innocent in the affair with the Pope, and that the incident with Walesa was likewise transparent and aimed at keeping up the spirit of the anti-communist newsmen and to substantiate the further detention of Sergei Antonov, rumours were planted as might have been expected, allegedly coming from the secret investigating offices, according to which Antonov had engaged in espionage. It is clear that all tricks will be tried. The assassination attempt against the Pope will be referred to time and again, the 'purported' incident with Lech Walesa, too, will be recalled and espionage and smuggling will again be looked for. The long-range campaign against socialist Bulgaria, and chiefly against the Soviet Union, must go on. The Americans and the NATO circles need this in order to poison the atmosphere, to disorient and stifle the rising discontent with superarmament and to have time to carry out their dirty deed, dic-

tated and imposed by Washington, a deed directed against peace, understanding and cooperation among the peoples.

The CIA, which as a rule acts with discretion, is now overtly meddling in the investigation which by rights is for the Italians to deal with. What more telling evidence could there be **proving** that the CIA has been at the back of this vile machination from the very beginning. The CIA is the initiator, the ideological organizer of this ignominious campaign against Bulgaria. It persists in its efforts — despite all the ridiculous failures it is suffering in trying to prove the 'Bulgarian connection'. In the final analysis, why the CIA, which has publicly shown itself to be the driving force in all this should not contend for the big medal for anti-communism, provided it succeeds in stocking up yet again the agonizing conspiracy against socialism.

MIRA TODOROVA
BTA political observer

Boris Dimovski



A Letter from Boyan Traikov, Director General of the BTA to Arthur Sulzberger, Publisher of *The New York Times*

Dear Mr Sulzberger,

It was with a certain amount of surprise that I read Nicholas Gage's article 'The Attack on the Pope: New Link to Bulgarians' (the 'New York Times', March 23rd).

Judging by the tone of the article, the 'New York Times' has decided, after four months of relative objectivity in reporting the so-called 'Antonov case', to throw its weight behind the anti-Bulgarian campaign.

On reading the article I asked myself how the publisher of a prestigious newspaper could permit the publication of an article on such an important topic in which the facts were either unsubstantiated or simply untrue and the line of thinking illogical. This can only be the result of a deliberate wish to misinform the public or of inadequate investigative journalism on the part of your correspondent.

If the latter is the case and the editors of the newspaper have been misled, it would perhaps clarify matters if I provided some instances of the shortcomings and inconsistencies which Mr Gage's article contained in abundance.

The article mentions somebody called Yordan Mantarov and alleges that this man 'was in an official position' and, moreover, boldly states that he was the 'deputy commercial attache' at the Bulgarian Embassy in Paris. Actually the person in question worked in France for the Bulgarian Company Agromachinaimpex as a maintenance mechanic. The article relates how Mantarov was told of the plot to assassinate the Pope by one Dimiter Savov, 'a high-ranking official of the Bulgarian State Security Agency'. Whether such a person existed or not makes no substantial difference, but nevertheless a check up was made. According to the computer of the Ministry of the Interior nobody of that name works for the Bulgarian State Security Agency, though no less than seven people of that name were found to be working in the militia as factory

guards, traffic controllers, etc.

As for the 'witness' Mr Mantarov, he had been misappropriating large sums of money during his stay in France and when the irregularities were discovered it was suggested that he should return to Bulgaria. Mr Mantarov, however, thought otherwise and sought 'political' asylum in France, though what he was wanting was clearly criminal asylum.

In his article Mr Gage cites three former Bulgarian citizens — Stefan Svrudlev, Velichko Peichev and Yordan Mantarov. It may surprise you to know that all three have been implicated in criminal offenses and have evaded justice by defecting abroad. Do you think that a criminal would hesitate to tell a few lies if certain people ensured that it was to his material advantage to do so?

But while it is conceivable that Mr Gage might have been misled by an excessive dependence on information that he had apparently obtained from the French intelligence service, one finds it difficult to believe that he couldn't detect the inconsistencies in Mantarov's naive story. Do you think that it is at all likely that an intelligence service that had undertaken such an intricate, top-secret operation as an attempt on the life of the Pope would be so indiscreet as to disclose the plot to such a motley collection of people including counterintelligence agents and even a maintenance mechanic. Is the 'New York Times' the sort of newspaper that can give credence to this?

Consequently, I find it impossible to believe that Mr Gage was informing his readers in good faith. This view is confirmed by the other unsupported claims that are to be found in the article.

For example, Mr Gage writes: 'the investigation also found that Turkish smugglers had such close ties with the Bulgarian authorities, including the state security police, that they were provided with depots to store their contrabanda goods and escorts for their boats out of Bulgarian waters ...' and so on and so forth.

What investigation is he referring to? No investigation into the problem of smuggling has ever claimed, let alone established, that the Bulgarian authorities have been implicated in the smuggling of contraband. The reason for this is simple. Bulgarian firms and organizations are not involved in smuggling.

A wide-ranging inquiry into the smuggling of drugs and arms is at present being conducted by the Italian magistrate Carlo Palermo. The investigation has not produced any evidence of Bulga-

rian complicity in the matter. Is it possible that Mr Gage is unaware of Judge Palermo's statements published in both the Italian and the Bulgarian press to the effect that his inquiry has implicated neither the Bulgarian authorities nor indeed any Bulgarian citizen in the arms and drugs smuggling affair.

How then is one to interpret Mr Gage's reference to the magistrate investigating the 'Antonov case' Judge Martella who is alleged to have said: 'Do you think Antonov would be in jail one more day, one more hour, without such facts?'

All the journalists who have been following this story, and especially the Italian colleagues, know perfectly well that Judge Margella has not unearthed any facts that prove that Agca's testimony against Sergei Antonov is anything other than perjury. Some time ago, in order to boost the anti-Bulgarian campaign, some of Agca's lies were 'leaked' to the press. Now that Mr Martella's inquiry has reached conspicuous deadlock and with it the campaign itself, do you think that Judge Martella wouldn't have leaked to the public a few facts in support of his case if he had them? Impossible. Just one fact would restore his credit before public opinion and would help him out of the unenviable position in which he finds himself. If Judge Martella had been able to prove any of the allegations against Antonov, it would have been quite unnecessary for the organizers of this provocation to set off on another track and beguile the public with another, even more clumsy story regarding Antonov's supposed involvement in a plot to kill Lech Walesa.

Having said all this there is something in the article which provides food for serious thought. I am referring to the following sentence: 'the only way for Antonov to save himself is to cooperate with the Italian police.'

How are we to understand this?

Is it really of no consequence that Antonov is innocent and Judge Martella cannot prove otherwise? Are justice and man's elementary civil and human rights going to be ignored?

Does the sentence that I have quoted above mean that the 'New York Times' suggests that the Italian judiciary, regardless of the truth, should apply pressure to Antonov with a threat of a very long term of imprisonment in order to make him plead 'guilty' in order to 'save' himself.

Finally, I should tell you Mr Sulzberger, that the article concerned is not only factually incorrect and implausible but completely misunderstands the political dimension of the assassination plot against the Pope.

The article proceeds from the assumption that the motive of the Bulgarian-Soviet involvement in the affair was, and I quote, 'alarm that the Pope had been chosen as an instrument to help disrupt his native Poland'.

This idea is, however, hardly original. Indeed it was the first 'evidence' which the 'Reader's Digest' and the NBC offered the public as proof of the 'Bulgarian connection' in the plot, so as to launch the present campaign against the socialist community.

The idea is in fact absurd, because it is well known that the assassination of this Polish Pope far from reducing tension in Poland would to the contrary have had a highly destabilizing effect on the situation in that country. If anybody was going to profit from the assassination of the Pope it was not the socialist countries.

If there was a plot to assassinate the Pope, then the organizers of the plot may perhaps be found in those circles who disliked the Pope's, in their view, excessively moderate stand regarding the crisis in Poland and who, in addition, were far from happy with Pope John Paul II's appeals against the arms race, and for peace.

That is, Mr Sulzberger, how I see the article 'The Attack on the Pope: New Link to Bulgarians' that your newspaper published. I sincerely hope that the article was published because of a lack of information, rather than through evil intent. If this is so I feel sure that my letter will be published. If, on the other hand, Mr Gage's article was published in full awareness of the facts of the situation, then it would mean to me that Judge Martella's inquiry has got so bogged down that even the 'New York Times' had to render it a helping hand.

Respectfully Yours
Boyan Traikov
Director General
Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA)

Late in December 1982 and early in 1983 the Bulgarian News Agency (BTA) and the Sofia Press Agency published the book entitled 'The Anatomy of a Slander Campaign'. Now we offer the reader another similar publication. Naturally the question arises: what made its appearance necessary?

The answer is: the continuing mean campaign of insinuations, flagrant lies, overt or covert attempts to link the name of Sergei Antonov and of our country with a repulsive terrorist act — the assassination attempt on the life of the Pope.

We should also add the task undertaken by the BTA and the Sofia Press Agency to familiarize the public with the rise throughout the world in the last few weeks of the sober voices which reject the pre-programmed campaign for defaming an innocent man and what is more, for defaming a whole country to which terrorism is organically alien as a means of achieving political goals.

The present book entitled 'A Subversion of the Neo-Crusaders', which we offer to the attention of our readers, discloses the mechanisms of a large-scale operation — the next link in the crusade declared by President Reagan against the socialist community, and also reveals the Bulgarian position of persistently unmasking the fierce anti-socialist campaign which some western circles continue to wage.